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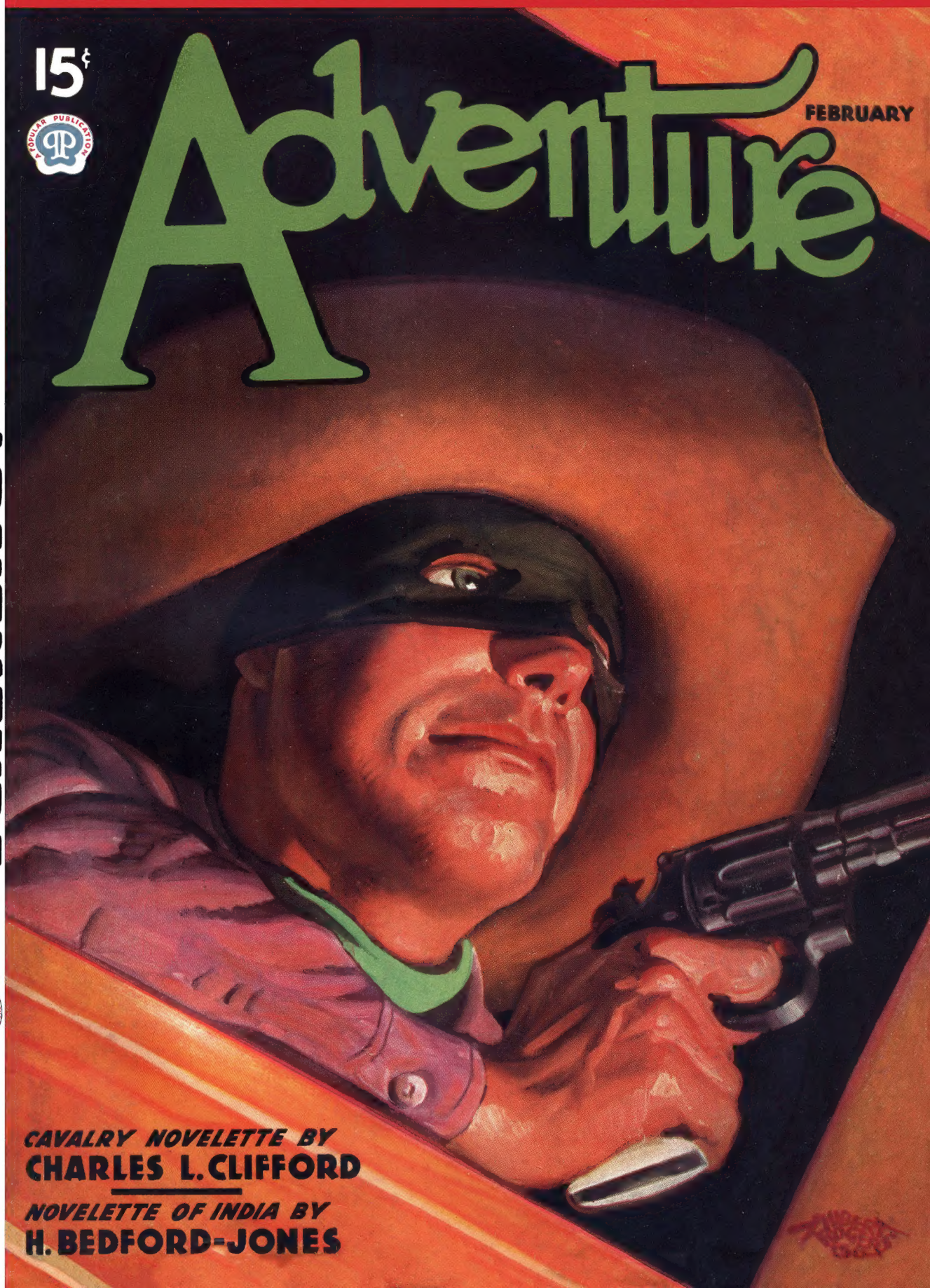

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The bugles call the cavalry. One more ride through the enemy's line; once more the thrill of living and, if need be, the glory of dying.

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Black Lightning . . . . . HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS 49
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A Mounty story. Big Miller was hard with men, and hard—too hard—with dogs.

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MARY'S RIGHT -- I'M NOT GETTING ANYWHERE. I OUGHT TO TRY A NEW FIELD TO MAKE MORE MONEY
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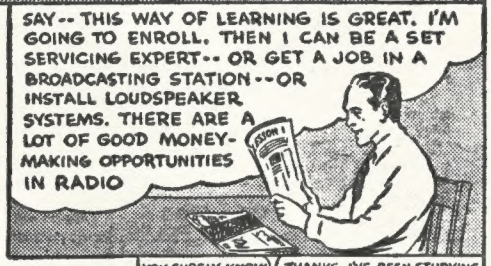
J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute

Yes, I will send my First Lesson FREE to show how easy it is to TRAIN AT HOME FOR A GOOD RADIO JOB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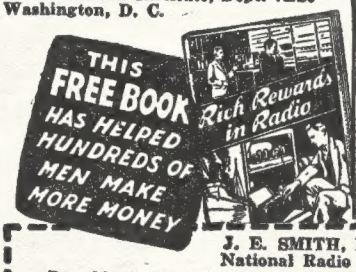

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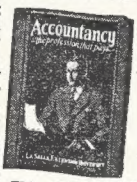

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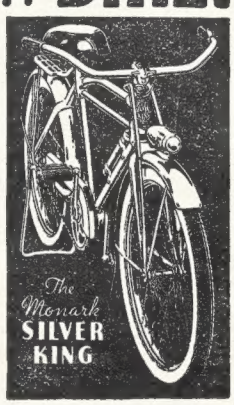

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THE LOST COMPANY

by CHARLES A. FREEMAN

SECOND only to the Custer massacre on Little Big Horn, Montana, for sheer horror and deeds of valor is the story of the Balangiga massacre in the Philippines. Unlike the unfortunate 7th Cavalry there were survivors of Company C, 9th Infantry, and from their lips has been pieced the record of what happened that fateful September day in 1901, when the "dark and bloody ground" of Samar lived up to its evil traditions.

General Pablo Lukban was in the hills issuing bombastic proclamations, although the insurrection fomented by Aguinaldo was dead as the proverbial door nail.

On the morning of the massacre a funeral party of natives entered the church, carrying with them a coffin. From the coffin they took *bolos* and then two men swung their weight on the rope of the church bell. As the first note boomed out the treacherous chief of police *boloed* the sentry at the jail.

Other natives dashed upstairs and butchered the unfortunate officers and the hospital corps man. The company was at breakfast, and unarmed.

Fighting with stools, ball bats and mess knives, the soldiers tried to reach their rifles. A few succeeded.

A sergeant and a few men finally fought their way to the beach and sought about for a fishing boat. The natives rushed them but were driven back three times. Finally three leaky dugouts were found and pushed out over the mud flats by twenty-four survivors, eleven of whom were badly wounded.

Not one of the voyagers knew anything of boats, and how the journey was made in safety is little short of a miracle. Finally the gruesome flotilla reached Leyte, and reported the massacre.

"The *bolo* men of Samar have fifty-three of our rifles," wrote General Hughes to Brigadier-general "Hell Roarin' " Jakey

(Continued on page 6)

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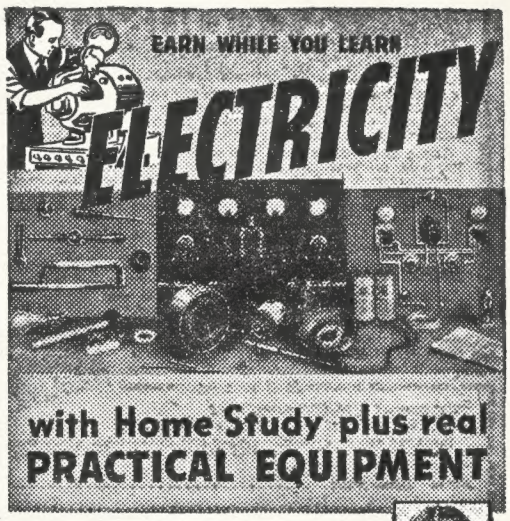

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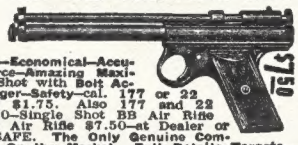

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(Continued from page 4)

Smith, in command of the punitive expedition. "Get those rifles by purchase if you can—but get them."

Smith's proclamation offered payment for the guns. None were brought in.

When Hell Roarin' Jake commenced to move he moved with startling rapidity. How many natives were wiped out during Smith's whirlwind campaign will never be known. It is said that every man above the age of fifteen found in the possession of a weapon was promptly shot.

During the campaign a company was ordered into the interior in pursuit of Lukban. The Marines, after a hot skirmish, drove the enemy before them and unwisely pursued. Soon the company became irrevocably lost.

There were no trails. And for days the Lost Company hacked its way through the jungles. Rations were exhausted, and fever gripped the Americans. Men wandered away from their command to search for food—and were never heard from again. Finally the Lost Company, sadly decimated, staggered out on a lonely beach. It had crossed the Island of Samar!

The world never learned much of the story of the Lost Company. And even in Marine Corps headquarters but little of it is recorded. But at the Charlestown Navy Yard a bronze plate honors those Marines who lost their lives in Samar.

Hell Roarin' Jakey was killing off too many *bolo* men to suit the homeland organizations. Political influence brought about Smith's recall, and he was forced to retire from the Army. But he had secured the majority of the rifles.

Court-martials ensued. Both Marine and Army officers faced them. All the junior officers were acquitted and Hell Roarin' Jakey was left to bear the onus of the affair. It is said that he died of a broken heart. Yet wherever gray-haired veterans of the Philippines congregate, Brigadier-general Jacob Smith is toasted as a first class fighting man and a gallant officer.

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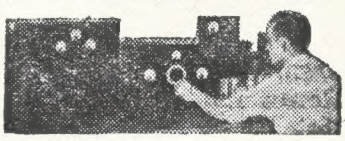

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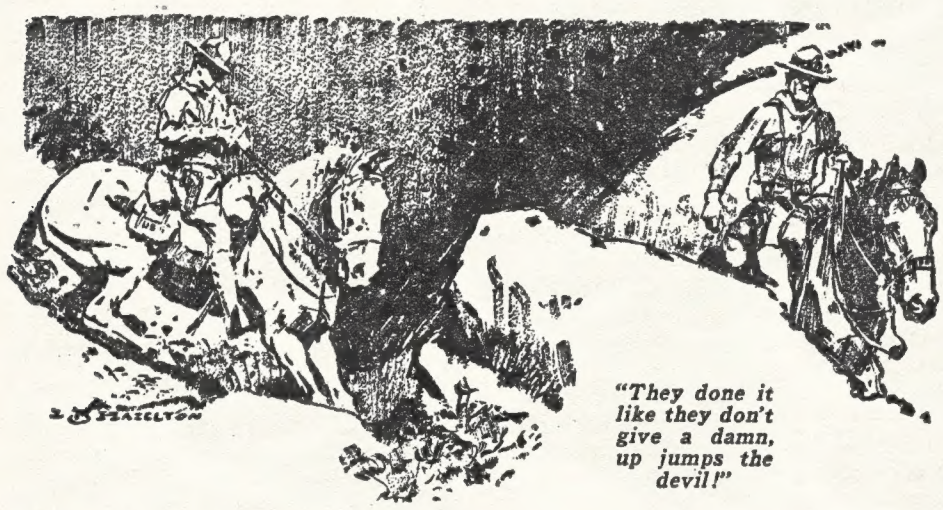


"They done it like they don't give a damn, up jumps the devil!"

A Novelette

by CHARLES L. CLIFFORD

OLD BROCK sat dreaming over a half filled schooner of beer. The canteen was crowded because it was payday. Later, when the night shut down, they'd be all over the town. At Mike's place, the Gate, the Resaca and up on the Hill. Wasting their money. Buying beer in the town wasn't so bad—but the *dancing!* What in hell was the army coming to? Brock shook his head hopelessly and stared into his beer. He knew for a fact they'd spend as much as a dollar of their hard-earned pay in a single night just to *dance.*

Moodily he studied them as they shoved and laughed and all talked at once along the bar. Wouldn't sit at a table and enjoy their beer like a soldier should. Always hurrying. Gulp and puff and throw half the cigarette away unsmoked. In the old days, when they had to roll them—

There was a noisy group close by. Mostly recruits, but there was one older man. An old soldier in this new army, Brock reflected bitterly, and not a good one. His name was Coper. The recruits were buying his beer.

Brock didn't like Coper. He was too smart—not as a soldier, but with words. He would juggle up all kinds of quick, smart-aleck words to make people laugh. He'd juggled up one that applied to Brock. Not highly original; but these young soldiers didn't know that.

Old Issue, Coper called Brock. He'd laughed and called it across the mess room one day and it had stuck. Old Issue. That put him in the class with the obsolete old sabers, wrapped canvas leggings, stiff-collared uniforms and gauntlet gloves with a flair on them that came halfway up to the elbow. Indeed, it was because of a pair of such gloves that Coper had jeered. Old Brock had worn them—proudly at first—one day out on horse exercise, and Coper had spotted them right at the stables.

Now, looking at the group by the bar, Brock could see that they were talking

about him. Coper was grinning, watching him.

"Hi, Brock!" he called. "Come here."

Brock drank some of his beer. As though it were sharp, fresh and not going flat on him.

"No kiddin', Brock. I got somethin' great to tell you. An' when you hear it you're buyin' beer."

Brock grunted, but deep in him curiosity flamed. Funny as it seemed, this wise-cracking Coper got all the dope somehow. He it was who first brought the news of the coming division maneuvers into the barracks. And he'd forecast the promotion of several noncoms—

At that thought, Brock's heart jumped. Could it be—after all these years? Almost thirty of them,—and the last ten as a private first class. No chevrons. Stripes were for the younger, better educated soldiers these days, it seemed.

"Pull up a chair then," Brock growled. "Take the weight off your feet. "You'll be wantin' them for dancin' later on."

Coper laughed loudly and walked

over. He pulled out a chair and sat down.

"Johnny," he called to the bartender. "Private Brock's buying two big ones."

Brock finished his beer in the schooner and when the fresh beer came he picked his up and stared at it critically.

"They're runnin' this outa the keg too fast," he observed. "An' them iron kegs they're usin'—" He caught himself. Mention the good old wooden kegs here and this Coper'd be off with his old issue wise-cracking.

Coper leaned close to Brock. "I just heard it today. Strictly confidential."

"So they tells *you*," Brock growled and drank some of his beer.

Coper laughed.

Brock took another swallow of beer. His heart was thumping strangely. "Heard what?"

Coper swallowed half his beer in one gulp.

"They're goin' to turn the regiment out for you, Brock," Coper said. "The whole works. The day you retire. You're going to be sitting up there on old Sugar Baby, right beside the colonel, with the whole outfit passing in review before you. Dipping the guidons, and all the officers and platoon leaders snapping you the highball, and the whole works galloping by, like you was a major general that was retiring."

Coper was still talking when he saw Brock's face. Something there stopped him. The eyes— They looked like Feery's eyes had looked that day in the store room when they were issuing ball ammunition and he had stepped up to the supply sergeant, quietly taken the packet from him, loaded his pistol to one side and shot himself through the mouth.

Coper got up. His beer was only half drunk. "Listen, I got to beat it. Brock, for God's sake don't leave anyone know I told you this!"

Brock's face was white. The great brown hand that held the handle of his beer glass shook. He looked up. "Coper, if this is any of your kiddin'—"

Coper was frightened, but he dare not admit his lie now. He was literally afraid for his life. He swallowed, trying to get words out that didn't sound guilty.

"Because if you are, you better go over the hill—fast."

"It's a fact, Brock, but talking about it might queer it. You know the colonel. He'll want it to be a surprise, or it maybe won't come off. I got it that way straight."

Coper was getting on surer ground now. Before the day came for Brock to retire, he could take a few days' pass. Or even— "Well, time for chow, old-timer, and thanks for the beer."

Left alone in the almost empty canteen, old Brock found himself shaking. It was as though, suddenly, with no more warning or reason than a laugh from Coper's ugly mouth, a beautiful white beach had appeared before him, with great green waves breaking along it, and the northern sun shining down and the cool salty wind of the ocean beating on his face.

If Coper had the dope it would be the final wonder of this wonderful last year of his soldiering. First he'd made the miraculous killing at crap almost a year before. In that one amazing streak of luck he'd won almost five thousand dollars. He'd always lost before, never saved a cent of his pay, never had anything to look forward to but the meager bit of a retired private when he went out. It sobered him, that streak of luck, and from that day he had saved. Quit gambling. Took only a few beers on payday and his account with the quartermaster grew.

Then came another wonder. In June, they said, a bonus would be paid to all soldiers in the war. Well, he'd seen nothing of the war. For thirty years he'd soldiered up and down the border, from

California to east Texas. But, in spite of that, they were going to pay him over seven hundred dollars. It didn't seem possible.

But it was, and it made possible a dream that had been growing this past year. He could go back. After all these years he could go to a place where they had snow and where he could see the ocean every day. Back to Jersey where he was born. A place he hadn't seen since he and another kid—poor Brick Fallon, who'd got a spik bullet in him years ago on outpost south of Marfa—had run off to Newark and just for the hell of it enlisted in the army, after a brief study of the posters of fancy looking soldiers in the post office.

Yes, now he could buy a little cabin on the beach. He knew just where (but he didn't know that now there was a ragged boardwalk there and hot dog stands and loud throngs cluttering the beach with papers and tin cans and empty bottles.) He could have maybe a little skiff and catch fish and crabs and dig his clams. He could live well for little. And he would be happy. Maybe he'd work a little, just for the exercise . . .

And during those lazy years, he could always look back to the final day of glory. He could lie on the warm sand, and over and over again he could see the regiment—his regiment—galloping by, all the horses with their heads out and their tails flying, and the standards snapping in the wind and the band playing and all of them doing him the honor of the salute. Even the officers. And all the time the band playing the regimental march.

And him sitting there on good old Sugar Baby, who'd carried him all over hell for sixteen years, as the old troop came along with the guidon dipping and even his own captain flashing his saber at him—

Yes, if that happened to him, a private, it would end his service as a soldier would want it. He wouldn't have felt quite right if it was just the tame garrison service going on when his time was up. But, as luck would have it, they were off on the big maneuvers. The whole division would concentrate in the wild Big Ben country, miles from anywhere in a real cavalry soldier's country. Two weeks on the road each way and two more of real mounted action in the hills and arroyos of the rough border country. He'd show them—these kids and wise guys like Coper—that old as they thought he was, he could ride through it all with the best of them—

"Johnny, another beer. An' take one for yourself."

The first troop dinner iron clanged out. Brock smiled. "Machine Gun." Another. "Headquarters." As they rang out a few minutes apart he named them, smiling. For years he'd heard them before each meal and knew the tone of each as he could spot the troops themselves a mile away.

Remembering suddenly, he got up. He felt good. Full of beer, but not too full. He said to Johnny, grinning: "Cold cuts tonight. Lots of pickles an' spring onions and potato salad an' sliced tomatoes. Johnny, when I settle down in my mansion, I'm goin' to grow my own tomatoes an' scallions an' golden bantam corn. I'm gonna dig my own clams an' steam 'em, a' have a nice dish o' melted butter an' a couple fried croakers. An' if I happen to want a appetizer, they'll always be the keg o' Jersey apple right there at hand. God's country, Johnny, that's where I'm bound."

Johnny, who had retired two years before, twisted his lips and spat. "Yeah. I seen many a guy come an' go from this border. I never yet seen a guy draw his finals but he was goin' to New York or maybe Europe or somewheres. Even me. But never one wasn't right here in the mesquite when all the shootin' was over, an' lucky if he could get a buck a day

shearin' sheep or runnin' cattle. I done better than the rest."

"You at least got free beer," Brock agreed, and he laughed and let the screen door bang behind him.

BUT old Joe Brock never had his cold cuts that night. He just happened, by force of habit, to stop and read the bulletin board on the troop porch on his way to dinner, and there it was, signed by the troop commander himself.

The memorandum explained that certain lame and old horses and an equal number of men of the troop would be left behind in the post when the regiment marched out for the maneuvers. And in that fatal list, as though ringed by fire, was: "Private First Class Joseph Brock, detailed care of horses at the regimental pool." And in the list of horses was his own, and under the heading "physical defects" the strange word "senility".

The top sergeant said: "Now, don't be a fool, Joe. An old soldier like you ought to know better. Course you can't see the troop commander at this hour. He's maybe playing polo or having a drink before dinner. You got service enough to know better than that. Anyway, he thought he was doing you a favor. You're not so young, Joe. Almost thirty years in. Hell, you've been to every maneuver they've had since Napoleon was a lance corporal. What's the percentage in you riding all over those rocks and sleeping on rocks and baking on them all day? Plenty of kids coming up for that stuff."

Wordless, Brock stared at the top sergeant. At last he gulped: "What's that there 'senality' they got 'side of my horse's name on that list?"

The top grinned. "That means she's old enough to vote, Joe. I guess she'll have to stay back here for the elections. She's done her share, too, that old mare. Be a shame to break her heart on a march like that."

Joe stumbled to the stables. Old Sugar was tied in, complacently munching her hay. She half turned, cocking her ragged ears at the sound of his voice and regarding him mildly. Brock passed his hand softly over her scarred croup. He felt alone, unwanted, except here in these empty stables. Everyone else in the troop gay and laughing at mess. All going—all except him and a few untutored recruits, three lame horses and Sugar, who was old enough to vote. His throat felt funny as he watched the chunky, unbeautiful troop horse and he muttered: "Damned if I'm goin' to take it layin' down, old girl!" He started off at a run.

The captain had just returned from the polo field. He came to the door of his quarters, still dressed in sweaty, dirty white clothes, his boots black on the inside with horse sweat. He'd been sitting in a cane chair by a table in the cool front room of his house and a bottle of beer stood there.

Old Brock was glad the captain wasn't married. It would have been harder if some woman had come to the door when he had rung the bell. It would have made it seem more official, something to tell quickly, something the captain might have told her later and that she might have laughed about.

The captain looked very tired. He'd worked hard all day, Brock knew, and now he'd just come back from one of those crazy polo games.

It was hard for Brock to get started, but finally he said his say. The captain sat smoking, looking at Brock through the smoke. Then he said: "Sit down, Brock. Would you like a bottle of beer?"

He went out and got the beer without waiting for an answer, handed it to Brock and sat down and lit a cigarette. "We've got all these recruits, Brock. All but three, who aren't up to it, need the hardening experience of the maneuvers.

They've got maybe years ahead of them. In a few months you'll be retired." He smiled. "You're not as young as you were once, you know. I thought you might want to get things together, decide what you wanted to do when you went out. Going to live in town, I suppose? Most of the men do."

"I'm goin' back to God's country, Captain," Joe Brock said steadily. "I seen enough of these old soldiers hangin' around in the sun. It's all right when you're soldierin' with somethin' to do, or maybe got a family."

Joe Brock drank some of his beer. It was cold and tasted good. The quiet of the room encouraged him. Outside he heard *Retreat* blow, the gun go off, the trumpeter of the guard blow *Colors*. He began to talk—haltingly at first, but as he went on he spoke faster. He told the captain something he hadn't put into words for years.

Of course it was on his record and the captain knew about it. But for years, secretly, it had shamed him. It was the cause of all his failure in the army, he thought—that one mistake he had made years ago. And when the time had come when he should have lived it down, licked it by later years of honest and faithful soldiering, it had jumped up and mocked him, made him a man unable to hold the stripes of a non-com.

In his second hitch he'd been stuck in a platoon station, a desolate outpost in the Big Bend country. The loneliness and the heat and the everlasting sand and blaze of the sun had beaten him down. He remembered the cool of the ocean country, the pulling of nets and hauling of lobster pots and the everlasting sweet smell of the sea. He was almost dead of hunger for his own country.

And then they had marched for maneuvers, just as in a few days now the regiment was marching. The old soldiers had talked and ranted. Warned of the hell of hiking all day in the sun, the rocky ground for a bed, the blast of the sun all day and the bitter cold of the mountain country at night. So when they got to the railroad, he and two others—one an old soldier malcontent—had jumped a freight. Just left their equipment, torn the insignia from their shirts and beat it.

They'd got as far as Alberquerque in New Mexico. The old soldier had gotten hold of some rotgut whiskey and he was drunk. He fell asleep and dropped under the wheels of the cars. It was a terrible sight for a youngster. They laid him out beside the track and the trainmen with their lanterns gathered around. And one of them said: "Just another bo."

The railroad police arrested him with the others, to get his fifty dollars reward they paid for a deserter in those days. And back in El Paso they'd tried him before a general court . . .

BROCK wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. He felt ashamed, sitting here in the captain's house and telling him this. And him sitting there so quiet, never a word of question.

"It was account of that—them first maneuvers I was on. The time I had to do in the guardhouse, now it's hung on the end of my service, like. I never done that maneuver. I feel like I owe the government one extry, you might say. An' now they ain't leavin' me go, or Old Sugar, who ain't missed one in her whole service. I'm bein' left back like I was a cripple, or no good, or an old man. I been lookin' forward to it, countin' the days to it, ever since I heard we was ordered out—"

There was silence in the room. The captain smoked on his cigarette. Then he lit another one. He looked very tired. Brock thought maybe he ought to go, but he didn't know just how to go about it. He picked up his campaign hat, twisted it in his big, tanned hands. The

captain didn't say a word. Brock drank the rest of his beer. It wouldn't do to leave any of it. The captain might think . . .

"Maybe it was account of I didn't make Expert last year on the range. The captain knows I always made Expert before. But I was goin' good—oney had eighty to make in the five and three hundred rapid. But dust blowed up both times; I couldn't even see the target. It dropped me to Marksman."

"That was all right, Brock. I understood."

"I know it hurt the troop record, that the captain figgered on me making it. Especially when they was that big bet up, they said the captain had with A Troop commander."

"It wasn't that, Brock. It's just—You know these maneuvers are going to be the biggest, most ambitious we've ever had here on the border. We're trying out harder and faster marching. There're all these new scout cars with radios and voice sets in them and armored cars. That means a tougher game for the mounted men all around. It's a young man's game now. It's really harder on man and horse than the old army. Even harder than the last maneuvers in twenty-seven."

Brock was leaning forward in his chair, barely keeping himself from breaking in. "I ain't that old, Captain. They says it was my eyes gone dim on me so I couldn't make Expert last year. But when we come back I got jest time to prove it on the range before my time is up. I'll bet my month's pay I make it this time."

"I'm sure you will, Brock."

"Captain, they may have all these here scout cars an' all, but I never seen a piece of border country yet where they wasn't places oney a horse could go. An' this area we're goin' into this time—well, I been to every maneuver they had around here, and many's the time I took huntin' leave right in that very country and packed through it for days. I know every trail an' arroyo an' tank like the palm of my own hand."

In his fervor Brock held out the palm of his right hand. The captain, he noted, was smiling now. He felt strong, sure of himself. "They ain't done away with horse patrols yet, Captain, an' if I do say it myself, I led many's them. Oncet on the last maneuvers the general himself comp'mented me, account of the way I got information of the enemy back."

The captain crushed out his cigarette.

"You go back to the troop and tell the first sergeant to take your name off that list, Brock," he smiled, "and Sugar Baby's, too."

CHAPTER II

NIGHT MISSION

A WEEK later the regiment marched. Two weeks later, dusty and travel-worn, they went into bivouac with the rest of the division deep in the Big Bend country.

Old Brock smiled reminiscently: this was the third time in his service he had slept on the same rocky piece of ground. They had marched over thirty miles under a blazing sun, but after supper he climbed the nearest high ground and stared about him. It was already cold and he wore his leather coat. Through the clear air he could see for miles. Mountains, mountains everywhere. And below him he could see the lights of the camp fires and the men moving. Thousands of them. He could see the long horse lines and the ranks of artillery caissons and covered guns.

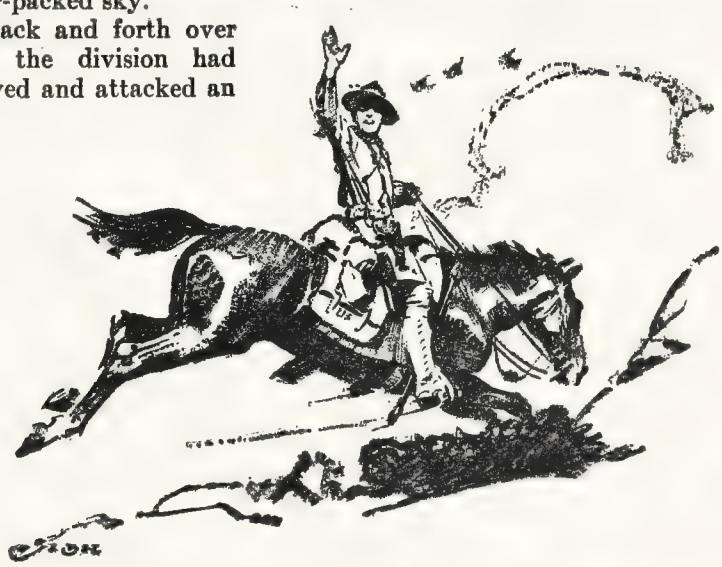
Too old, was he? Well, he was here; he'd be here when it was over. Plenty of these young ones had been sent back already, and there'd be plenty more. Couldn't take it.

Brock laughed aloud and lay back against a rock. Wait until tomorrow, when they saw the rock-strewn hills and steep arroyos they had to charge over at the extended gallop. Wait 'til they saw horses going down in front of them and saw the field ambulances and litter bearers following them like buzzards. Wait 'til the cloud of dust from the charging lines in front smothered them, and they couldn't see but still had to gallop on. Old Issue, eh? Well, he'd been through it over and over again. And he was still here hale and hearty—

Old Brock lifted his arms high and stared up at the star-packed sky.

A week went. Back and forth over the wild country the division had marched and deployed and attacked an imaginary enemy. The horses were weary and gaunt, the sun-blackened faces of the men were drawn. Dust and dirt was over everything, even the shining guns and the bright new scout cars. Water was scarce, food monotonous, the ground harder and harder. Up in the dark, water and saddle up. March, march, under a pitiless sun. No shade within miles. Not a tree in sight, not a shadow that would cover a man. Back to camp at dark. Groom, water, feed. Hardly able to walk from utter weariness. Too tired almost to eat. And then, with a meager blanket, back to the rocky ground for a few hours of sleep—if lucky.

Plenty had been sent back all right, Brock reflected. But what the hell? Some great general, so he had heard, once said you couldn't make an omelet without breaking eggs. Well, they'd made a mighty fine omelet. All those troops moving so smooth and the guns bouncing by with dust thick over the drivers and the cannoneers, or whatever they called themselves. And even those funny armored cars and the scout cars with the thing like a fishing rod bending and whipping behind, rocking down the steep hills and ripping up them. And the general out there on a big horse, riding as hard and as wild as the craziest recruit.



"It's a young man's game now. . . ."

Yes, he wouldn't have missed it for all the dough in his finals. It was the best one he'd seen in his thirty years of soldiering. "They done it like they don't give a damn, up jump the devil," Brock thought. "Sure, guys gets hurt. What the hell they in the calv'ry for if they don't expect to get hurt?"

And he spoke from first hand knowledge: two guys in his own squad had been hurt, and that's why he was now acting corporal. Funny, he thought, he was now in command of a squad, just

as much as if he'd been a real non-com. And he was sure of himself as he never had been before.

Twice before in his thirty years he'd been given stripes, but he couldn't hold them because he was afraid. Through the years those words of the Judge Advocate had burned in him. A poor soldier. Unfit to lead others. And when he was "made" those two times, he had no confidence in himself. Unfit to lead and give orders to better men, men who had never broken their oath of enlistment. So he had, in the end, lost the chevrons.

HE wasn't any too proud of his squad. Take, for instance, this Coper. He was the one with the most service—two hitches. But in that short time he had two convictions before a summary court and once got three months and two-thirds his pay for some trouble with a non-com.

"He better not try any that funny business on *me*," Brock thought. "I wouldn't report him like that other guy did. I'd jest invite him back one these big rocks outa hearin' of the camp—" Still, Coper had done his work well enough so far. Better yet, he had finally cut out all that fool wise-cracking. He had been very quiet. Hardly spoke to anyone, like he was always moping over something. Well, he wasn't much of a man with a horse. Couldn't seem to ride right, and marches such as they'd been having were killing things if you didn't.

Then there were two very new recruits in the squad. Both good kids, but they hardly knew what it was all about yet. Had to show them everything: how to fix their rolls and quick ways to arrange equipment so they could get it on their horses in the dark. Even how to spread their blankets so they wouldn't freeze at night. But good, trying-hard kids.

The other two in the squad, Wilmer and Mott, were recruits, too, but they were smarter. They'd known each other before. Came from the same town up north somewhere. Always off by themselves talking. They weren't bad riders—probably worked on ranches before enlisting. They said they had, anyway. And they thought Coper a great fellow. Believed all his lies of hikes and camps and wars which he'd never seen. They'd buy beer for Coper and he was always bumming smoking from them.

A swell squad, all right!

But Brock was proud of it, secretly.

When the captain told him he was in charge, he gathered them about him. He couldn't wait to make it clear to them that they had a special place in the warlike organizations about them, that whatever they did they must do better than other squads: quieter, more orderly at watering; groom faster and better; saddle up promptly and properly; and especially—and here Brock's eyes gleamed—be on the alert for any special arduous duty that they might be called on to perform, such as point of the advance guard, a flanking security group, or a patrol.

In his heart Brock knew there was little chance of being selected for important duty—an old private, acting non-com only, and green men. But before them he showed no such doubt. It didn't do any harm and it was nice thinking of such a thing, as he did night after night lying on his back staring up at the Texas stars.

Half the next week the division maneuvered against one of the regiments with artillery and a company of mobile infantry attached. The regiment held up the advance of the larger force, delaying it by long range fire and sharp counter attacks on the flanks. Then it would drop back to another position in rear when closely threatened. It was hard work and sometimes exciting. But to acting corporal Brock and his five men it was just ploughing through the sun-shot murk, surrounded by hundreds of others

so masked with dust you couldn't tell one from another.

Then came a blessed day of rest. The division broke into its two brigades and they lay in camp with some twenty miles of empty country between them. Neither knew the position of the other. The next dawn would see them groping, watchful, eager to be at each other's throats. For this final phase of the maneuver pitted two complete and equal forces against each other, each with traditions and training of its own to justify. Umpires would be watching every move, listening to every order, and would decide this game of men and steel, this game closest to warfare that peacetime armies can achieve.

THE tenseness of the coming movement had communicated itself down to the newest recruit. Their brigade must win. Lying in their blankets, heads propped on their dusty saddles, the older soldiers muttered, the young ones questioned eagerly. Tales were told of smashing charges where, in spite of all the rules and all the umpires could do, the opposing forces ripped into each other and men and horses went down, the men still fighting hand to hand on the ground. There were stories of impossible rides to surprise an enemy, troops scaling heights and riding down cliffs considered impassable; of standards and even generals captured by unbelievably fast raids to an enemy's rear.

Old Brock listened, saying nothing. But it thrilled him, even as he lay smiling in the dark. He'd seen more of it than all of them put together. Some of the stories they told he vaguely connected with real happenings, but so grotesquely colored now by soldier legend that they were almost unrecognizable.

In the midst of it he heard the first sergeant's voice calling his name.

"Here!" Brock said, and he lifted himself from his saddle.

"Report to the captain's tent right away."

Brock buttoned his shirt and knotted his tie. He tried to brush some of the dust from him. Then he stumbled over sprawled men, along the line of horses.

The captain's tent was open in front. There was a cot and a table with a big map spread out on it. Brock had always been afraid of maps. There were rocks holding this one down and a bright Coleman lamp shining on it. The captain sat on the cot. He was in his undershirt and dusty breeches and his boots were off. He looked thin; his face was almost black and his lips were swollen and cracked.

When Brock saluted, he said: "I've got a job for you, I think. Didn't you tell me you've been on all the other maneuvers down here?"

"I never missed one of them, Captain."

The captain kept staring at the map. Brock swallowed hard. "I never had a non-com's trainin', Captain. I don't know nothin' about maps." There was pleading in his voice and in his faded eyes.

"Ah!" The captain looked up sharply. "I feel like shaking hands with you, Brock. I feel the strength coming back to me. In this camp, we've got hundreds of map experts. What I want is a man who knows the *ground*. Who can find it in the black dark, without wasting hours hunting around for landmarks. Didn't you tell me once you knew it like the palm of your own hand?"

"I did, sir."

"Well, I hope you know your hand. Look here now—"

Later, on the picket line, Brock gave orders in a shaking whisper. He, himself, was wild with wakefulness. Coper had cursed when he shook him, but when Brock had whispered his news Coper had come out of his blanket with an unnatural alertness.

"We'll want Wilmer and Mott," he

said. "The other two wouldn't know what a patrol was all about." That was so, Brock agreed. Quietly, so as not to wake the men lying about, they saddled up, led the horses well out of camp.

Where a trail to the north topped a rise, Brock halted them. He was aglow with the importance of his mission. He warned, in a whisper: "Coper, you're second in command. Folly me an' later I'll give you the mission."

Over the rock trail old Sugar Baby picked her way unerringly, the other three horses close behind. All Brock had told Coper was that they were an important patrol that might effect the whole success of the brigade and that their first objective was a railroad tank some ten miles to the north. He hadn't told him how he knew this trail so well, or that railroad tank stop where freights from the west took on water after long hauls through the mountains; nor why he felt that now, after twenty-five years, he was going to expiate, on the very scene of the crime, a sin that had weighed him down all his service.

He rode ahead, his blood raging with the perfection of this hour. A thin moon and the countless stars showed him the little he needed to see. Truer than anyone knew, he knew this road. Like a loosed bullet he could have sped to that tank in the blackest of nights.

"Step on it, Sugar," he whispered to the trotting horse.

IT was still dark when the patrol reached the railroad right of way. The tank loomed black against the bright heavens. The trail led to a gate. They passed through it, dismounted and closed it carefully behind them. In the shadow of the tank they tied the horses. When this was done, Brock called them about him.

Never before in his life had he felt quite the power and the humility that now possessed him. Right in this spot, almost where he was standing, he had stood that night and watched that freight pull in. Just down the track, he had swung up between two cars as Jake Mocker had told him . . .

"You guys make yourself comfortable. Sit down here where you can all hear me. Now I'm gonna give you the low-down—"

In the weird light it seemed to him that he caught a strange gleam in Coper's watching eyes. And Coper said softly: "Isn't there a freight due along here soon? Twice when we came across here before, last week, one went by further down. Night we camped at Frazer's ranch below here one went by about reveille."

"Sure. But we ain't botherin' about freights," Brock said. "Both sides got to stay on their own side of the railroad until five-thirty. Then we hit the trail hard."

Coper listened attentively. Brock was glad he was taking such an interest in it all. Coper said: "Somebody better get up to the top of the tank and keep an eye out. Up there you could see the Reds if they have a patrol like ours. We get an observer up this tank with a pair of field glasses and with even this light he could spot them—"

"Now you're talkin', Coper," Brock said enthusiastically. "You got the right idea."

"But maybe my judgment might not be so good as some." He stared at the field glasses that were slung over Brock's shoulder and then looked at the tank. "Quite a climb up there—" he nodded towards the top of the tank! "—but then these kids who's young enough to scamper up there hasn't the experience to know what to look for or how to judge what they see. I guess it would be a little tough on you, wouldn't it, Brock? Course you'd be far and away the best man—"

Brock thrust his chin out. "What you

mean, *make* it, Coper? I'll make any climb or ride or formation you or any other guy in the troop will."

Coper laughed softly. "Aw, now don't get sore. You know I was only kidding. Only it's been a tough three weeks on everybody, and you, you aren't as young as you were once."

Brock shot his arm up, thumb jabbing towards the sky: "Hell! I could beat you or any these recruits up that ladder. I'll handle that, don't worry. All you got to do is stay down here in the shadder of the tank and be all set to pull. Now, you guys, gather round here close. I'll give you the information all patrols should have before they goes into hostile territory—"

Old Brock gave them the information. Save for a mild amount of cursing, a few soldier solecisms, and several dark warnings, his explanation of their mission was terse and reduced to such simple terms that even the dumber of the two recruits understood it.

He informed them that the two reinforced brigades were north and south of the railroad respectively and about equidistant. That the "war" began at five-thirty. That until that time neither could move elements across the railroad. That two roads suitable for mechanized units, such as armored and scout cars, lay in the usable area between the two belligerents, and that motor reconnaissance would handle them. But that to the west was rough country passable only for horse units; to the east of that road most of the terrain was open and rolling and the chances were that the other force would move in that section.

But there was an off-chance that the Reds might make a feint in the good country with motor units, which would really be covering their flank—but actually come fast and furious over the rough west country, where they would not be expected.

The essence of this movement would be speed and surprise and it would have to be negotiated over a single, rough trail—the very one the patrol was now on and which branched from the main west road some distance north of the railroad. If this happened, early information of it was vital to the Blue commander. A horse patrol had to be used, as there was no aviation on either side and motors could not negotiate the rough, rocky trail.

"Get it?" Brock concluded.

They all nodded, all except Coper, who was staring up the track.

"Okay, then. Our job is first to get to where we can observe that road junction an' lay in observation there."

Again they nodded.

"Okay. Now I'm gonna monkey up that tank."

Coper watched Brock climb the tank ladder. When the old man was far above them, he herded the others away from the tank and close to the fence. He talked to them in low, fierce whispers—

"I think I hear her comin'," Coper warned. Then he saw the blurred figure of Brock swaying downward on the tank ladder. "All right, guys!"

They stood at the foot of the ladder, Mott in front. In their hands they held the surcingles they had taken from their saddle pockets. They stood waiting, looking up, and when Brock was almost to them he twisted his head so that he could see them and said in a grating whisper: "They's a freight comin'. I could see her headlight up there."

As he reached back for the last step they grabbed him. The big recruit Mott wrapped his long arms about him from behind and the other two lashed the surcingles about his legs and arms. Coper himself tore his mouth open with a bandana handkerchief used for a gag.

OLD Brock didn't get a chance to struggle effectively, but he writhed and bucked and fierce, muffled sounds came from his throat.

They dragged him under the tank and gathered about him. Coper said, hoarsely: "We've got nothing against you, Brock—just that you're a damned old fool. We're pulling out. We've all had enough of this lousy maneuver and we aren't going through the hell of another week of it."

Brock lay very still after Coper had spoken. The light was coming now, and all their faces showed white, unnatural. Coper turned to the recruits and explained to them how they were to board the freight. "A box car is what we want. We'll stay right here and I'll pick it out while she's watering."

The man Wilmer said: "What we do with Brock and the horses?"

Coper grunted. "They can't see him under here. If they see the horses, they'll just think it's a lot of soldier foolishness. These train guys in this part of the country get used to funny things."

"How's he going to get loose?" Mott said, hesitatingly.

Coper laughed. "When the enemy comes along they'll find him all ready for the butcher. And if they don't come this way then some of our outfit will. Hell, don't worry about him. Old fools like him always have someone holding them by the hand. It's guys like us need to worry."

Brock was making strange motions with his head towards Coper.

"He wants you to take off the handkerchief," Wilmer said.

"And have him sounding off so they can hear him in camp?"

"Maybe if we asked him . . . ?"

"He might want to come along with us," Mott said.

Coper stared down at Brock. "How about it, Old Issue? If I take it off will you pipe down? It's a pretty dirty old rag. I'd hate like hell to have it in my mouth."

Brock nodded several times and Coper released the gag and propped him up against one of the tank supports.

"Now," Coper warned, "no preaching. This duty stuff, or what we'll get if they catch us, or any of that kraut is no use."

Brock drew a deep breath.

"I jest want a smoke," he said. Wilmer lighted a cigarette and placed it in his mouth.

"Thanks, kid," Brock said and he drew deep on it. "We got a few minutes before you boys leave. I never told nobody this here story; but seein' we're right at the exact identical place it happened, I thought you fellas might enjoy it. It was the time I went over the hill."

They all started. Even Coper's eyes opened wider. Then he laughed. "Don't try kidding me, Brock. You never went a day's A. W. O. L. in your thirty years, you sap. I'm wise to your game. We won't untie you, so don't try painting yourself black an' then saying you'll go along with us. Not a chance."

"I NEVER thought of no such thing," Brock replied mildly. The cigarette stuck to his lower lip, he puffed again, deeply, exhaled and stared up at the cloud of dim smoke. "Hell, no. I never went A. W. O. L. But over twenty years ago, right at this here self-same tank, me an' Jake Mocker—he was an old-timer, too—reminds me a whole hell of a lot of you, Coper—an' a big john recruit, the three of us deserted. We was on maneuvers, like we are now, oney in them days it was a lot tougher. Right at this very tank we jumped a freight. Maybe the same one's comin' along now; them old cars an' engines and engineers, they don't die, they last forever. Jest dry up an' blow away like old soldiers—"

Wilmer laughed, a little shakily. Mott said: "Where was you headed for?"

Brock laughed. "Like all soldiers what make the mistake of desertin', we listened to some wise guy what said they was easy work in the harvest fields and plenty of dough in it an' no top sergeant to give you hell."

Coper scowled. The two recruits looked covertly at each other. Coper said: "I can hear her coming. Better put that rag in his mouth now."

Mott straightened and peered through the dimness. "We got lots of time. Let's hear what happened. I never rode no freight before."

Mott and Wilmer were looking at Brock. Brock went on: "We got in a box car, like you plan. An' we had some grub an' our canteens—By the way, when you troopers leave, don't take no government property. Them canteens'll cost me plenty later."

"Don't worry," Coper growled. "We're not thieves. Thing is, we don't see why a soldier's not got the same right to quit a job he don't like, same as any other citizen of the U. S."

Brock looked at Coper for quite a while without a word. Then he said softly: "Has a citizen got the right to break a solemn oath he swears to, then?"

Coper made no reply.

"Go on; what happened?" Mott insisted.

"We had a nice ride in the box car. At El Paso we bummed around a while an' then started north up through New Mexico. It gets cold up there in them mountains. We got us some whiskey in El Paso an' when they was oney one pint left, Mocker kept that for himself. This part of the trip they wasn't any box cars we could get into, an' Mocker showed us how to ride the tops and the couplin's, holdin' on to the little ladder they have there. You boys will have to do that before you're through."

"I guess we can do it, if these all-in bums can."

"Maybe. But remember—" Brock wagged his head—"don't drink no whiskey and don't go to sleep. You're liable to fall off. This guy Mocker did. He fell right between the car. Wheels went over his legs. Both of them. We was oney switchin' in the yards, an' you could hear Mocker maybe for a coupla miles the way he yelled. Screamin' he was, an' it was worse than anything he ever had to put up with in the service, you can bet. But when we got to him, layin' there by the side of the tracks where the wheels had throwed him, he was quieter. All dust an' cinders he was, an' his face whiter than a sheet. The blood was all run outa him by that time, an' he jest lay there twitchin', an' now an' then a kinder moan.

"They grabbed us guys an' we had to identify him. He could barely talk a little, chokin' like, an' while I was holdin' onto his hand—cold as ice, it was—he said: 'Kid, you go on back. It's the best life a guy can lead, soldierin', an' I done wrong to talk you outa it.' And he said to the trainmen around: "These kids didn't know no better an' I led them off by lyin' to them. Don't turn them over to the railroad bulls—"

Brock stared up the track. They all heard the train whistle. Wilmer said, in

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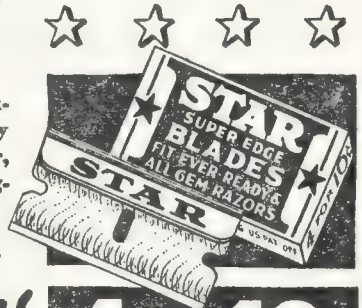

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a low voice: "Did they—turn you over to the bulls?"

"They beat hell outa us," Brock said.

Coper laughed scoffingly. "Who was the other guy?"

"Brick Fallon. You wouldn't know him. He got a Spick bullet through him back here on the river years ago, while you was probably puttin' little kids up to pinch stuff off fruit wagons."

CHAPTER III

THE LAST COMMAND

THE freight burst on them suddenly, its headlight dimming in the dawn. Hastily, roughly, Coper tied the handkerchief back in Brock's mouth. They all lay still, crouching. The cars ground to a stop and water from the engine intake fell splashing about them. Coper hissed: "That one there! See, the door's part open. We better get goin'." They were up on their haunches, the recruits, watching Coper. "So long, Old Issue," Coper said to Brock. "Go on back and tail-shine that saddle some more. And when your time is up, take your lousy thirty-five bucks a month for all the hell you been through for thirty years and see how far it goes. A dollar for every year you wasted being shot at and laying on the wet ground and grooming horses and taking insults from top sergeants and risking your neck every day. Now I'm pushing, I can tell you the joke we pulled on you. Everybody in the troop's laughing about it behind your back. *Review for you!* Why, you big dummy, they wouldn't turn a squad out when your time's up. The colonel never even *heard* of you. That stuff's only for non-com's who've made good in the army."

They were gone, but Coper's last words echoed still in Brock's ears. He made a supreme effort and the surcingle about his arms slipped loose. Feverishly he tore the handkerchief from his mouth. He drew his bolo and cut the bonds about his legs. The freight was still standing on the tracks.

It was almost light. He ran for the car he thought Coper and the recruits had entered. He clutched the floor boards and drew himself up, crawled into the dark interior. He pushed at the door, opening it wider. It slid, squeaking, shaking. Three men sprang up from back in the darkness. "Coper! Come on outa here now. You're in arrest, all of you."

Instinctively as he spoke he put his hand on the butt of his empty pistol. The men rushed him, and in the flash of time before they got to him he saw that they were not Coper and the recruits. They were in rough civilian clothes. They looked like hardened bums. He felt a terrific blow on the head. He hit one man hard. The man went down. The car began to move, jarring a little.

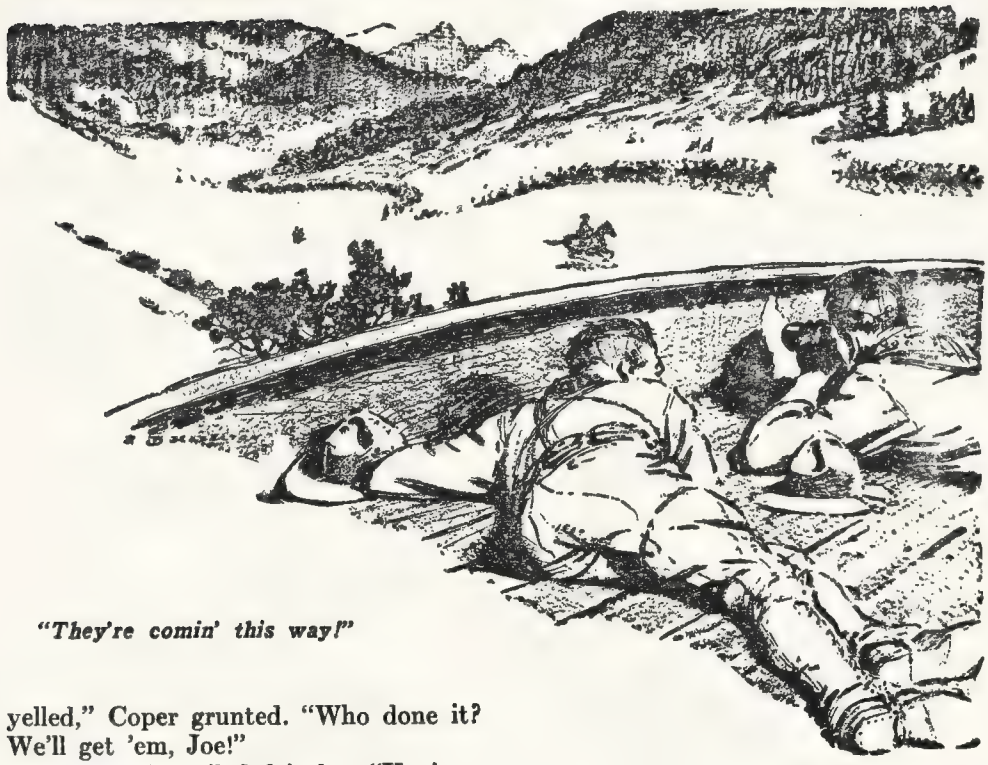
"God, they got soldiers after us!" one of the men snarled.

"Coper! . . . Mott! . . . Wilmer! . . ." Brock yelled.

The third man came at him. He felt a shock, a blinding, burning pain, sudden weakness. He fell backward; a thousand hands seemed on him. He clutched wildly at the car door. Even the shock of the fall to the rocky roadbed hardly made itself felt against that burning pain in his side. Dust from the moving freight swept into his face, blurring his eyes. But above the sound of the wheels he thought he heard voices. He sat up, his fingers pressed hard over the place the knife had gone. He looked down and saw blood and felt its warm wetness.

"I got to get my first aid open," he thought, and then, as he fumbled for it, he saw Coper and the two recruits jump from a car and run toward him.

"We couldn't locate you when you



"They're comin' this way!"

yelled," Coper grunted. "Who done it? We'll get 'em, Joe!"

Old Brock smiled faintly. "Up in a car ahead. You couldn't ketch them now. An' if you don't hurry—" Brock tried hard to grin—"You're gonna miss your train."

"To hell with that," Coper said. "You're badly hurt, old-timer. Here, let me look at that—"

It didn't look as bad as it was, where the knife went. Not as bad as Brock knew it was. But he said, grinning: "I seen a lot of wounds worse than that never hurt nothin'. Hell, you can't kill an old soldier with no knife, or anything else. They jest dries up an' blows away in about a hundred years or so. Come on, let's get goin' on that patrol—"

THEY mounted and rode fast to the north. Brock sat stiffly in the saddle, his right hand tight against the compress under his shirt.

At last Brock took his hand from his side, pointing. "There's the cattle tank. See, 'way up on that hill ahead. If we can get up there we can see easy as far as the trail junction."

They galloped on and luck was with them. Just in time Brock, who was in the lead, saw the hostile patrol, spotted the white bands around the troopers' campaign hats and led his own men into a nearby arroyo until the unsuspecting Reds had trotted by to the south.

"We'll see they don't get no information back," he muttered grimly. "Come on, guys—"

Near the cattle tank there were some cottonwood trees and they left the horses hidden there with Wilmer in charge. The others climbed the steep little hill to the tank and Brock, staggering a little, led the way up the ladder to the top. Coper tried to help Brock.

"You don't look so good, Joe," he said. "You look white as hell."

"I got a job to do here," Brock said.

The tank was boarded over and its

iron sides made a low parapet above the boarding. But before Brock warned them down flat on their stomachs, he gave a triumphant cry. "There they are! An' they're comin' by the trail. Holy mackerel, they're miles long. It's the whole brigade!"

Plainly through the clear mountain air they could see the long, thin, high cloud of dust that betrayed the other brigade. For miles back it seemed to stretch. Shaking, Brock dragged out the field glasses from their case, leveled them over the parapet.

"The head of the column is by the fork now. Course they jest may be sending some of them this way, and maybe the rear regiment will go to the east. Soon's the head of the second regiment passes, then we'll know."

"They'll be damned near on us by then," Coper said.

"We can't take no chance on bein' captured," Brock muttered. "I'm gonna write the message out now—the first one."

A few minutes later Mott tore away to the south to report the first contact.

Brock whispered to Coper. "When the first regiment clears that fork, we'll send Wilmer with another message. But—" he turned slightly on his side and a strange sound came from between his teeth— "as you said, by that time they'll be almost on our neck. You an' me go then. That's a job for old soldiers ridin' hard an' smart."

"You can't ride hard, Joe—you can't ride at all," Coper said. His eyes were fixed, fascinated, at the thin line of blood running from Brock's mouth.

"That's what you think," Brock said, trying hard to grin.

The leading regiment cleared. Coper was using the glasses now. Brock had handed them to him. "I can't see so good. I got all kinds of dust in my eyes from that lousy freight—"

"I'll write the message," Coper said. "And when it goes off I'm riding toward the Reds."

Brock breathed hard, wiped his mouth. His eyes, from dimness, glowed. "Quittin' again. Took prisoner, eh? An' then lay in the shade all day under guard while the rest of us fight."

"There's doctors back of each regiment," Coper said. "You're hurt bad, Joe. I'm not going to let you die here with doctors coming along in a few minutes."

Brock said: "Listen, if you do that, you give the whole show away. Then they know our brigade knows they're comin'. They'll change direction of march. What we sent back by Mott an' Wilmer will be worse than if we sent nothin'. Because the general will act on it. Don't you see that?"

COPER was silent for a while. His green eyes stared off towards the growing dust cloud. At last he said: "I did you a dirty trick about that lie I told about the review. I'm not going to do you another."

"If you was to read history," Brock said, "instead of goin' dancin' at night, you'd learn that many's a soldier's life was lost for damned sight less important things than this. All Brick Fallon done was ride down to the river to ketch a mess o' catfish for chow an' he gets a Mauser slug through the guts—"

Coper wrote out the message, read it to Brock. It stated that one Red regiment of cavalry had cleared the fork, that a second was following at a distance of about a mile. That Brock would remain in observation. Brock nodded.

"I'll take it to Wilmer," Coper said.

"You'll call Wilmer up here," Brock growled. "I ain't been soldierin' thirty years an' become as dumb as you think, Coper."

When Wilmer climbed up to them the dust cloud was close. Brock turned on his side, groaned. The recruit stared

at him, fear and horror in his young eyes. "Kid, when you go down, unsaddle the horses an' turn them loose in that little corral by the trees. Throw some dust on them Preston brands on their necks. Hide the saddle equipment under the floor of that rotten shed there. See it?"

"Yes."

Coper appealed to the recruit. "He's bleeding to death. He's light-headed and he thinks he's throwing the show away if he gives himself up to the Reds. Now you beat it and tell all you've seen here. Right to the colonel. I'm going down and ride for a doctor. I'm going to swear Brock and I are the only Blue troops come this way, that our outfit told us to send a message only if the Reds came this way. That isn't going to hurt anything. It's even going to help."

Brock's breath was coming hard, but a cunning look leaped into his eyes. "All right. You do as I say, Wilmer, or you'll be facin' a general court. I'm in command here. Coper—you stay here. I don't want you to leave me, 'cause I feel mighty funny. I want you to put your first aid compress on me. Mine's kinder soaked through."

"You're right, Joe. All right, you beat it, Wilmer, and do like Brock says . . ."

The sun was well up now, hot over the mountains. Brock and Coper lay on their bellies, close to the wooden top of the tank. They had each found a crack through the iron parapet and stared through it at the sight below them. Without glasses they could see the end of the dust-crowned column of the advancing troops. Wilmer was gone. The dust of his trail had died behind him. The head of the first regiment was almost to the tank. Its advance guard had gone well past and groups of security detachments on its flanks.

"They never even noticed our horses," Brock breathed.

"But it don't make any difference," Coper replied.

"Look, Coper. You said you was sorry for that lie you told me about the review?"

"I'm ashamed of all that business, Joe. But—"

"I can turn you in. Desertion and incitin' others to desert. It's a general court, Coper."

"I know it. But—"

"I figger you owe me a good turn. I'll forget all that if—"

"No. Nothing doing, Joe. I'll take what's coming to me. But I figure this cut you got's turned your head a little. I'm going on my own judgment in this. No use arguing."

"That's okay. But what I mean is—wait 'til this first one goes by. It's oney a little while more. Wait 'til the other passes the fork. See which trail it's takin'. They's doctors with them, too."

"But there's over a mile between them. Maybe ten minutes. You could bleed to death in that time."

"She's stopped now. I feel good."

"I shouldn't do it . . ."

They lay close to the boards as the regiment below them trotted by. They could hear the beat of the hoofs on the hard ground. Now and then a horse whinnied.

"I hope that Sugar Babe don't pipe up," Brock hissed. "Jest like her to want to be in on everything—"

AT last the sounds died away and they peered cautiously over the brim of the tank. Dust hid the column to the south and still hung lazily over their trail almost as far back as the second column. Eagerly they stared and Brock cried out suddenly: "They're comin' this way. The second regiment. Now we got all the dope!" He was crawling towards the ladder, shoving his field glasses into their case.

"Hey! Where you going?"

Slowly, painfully, Brock was feeling his way down the ladder. He looked up at Coper. "I'm goin' where I belong. They's a side trail back here I know. If we ride hard we can beat that first regiment back to the brigade with all the dope. You can stay here an' get captured if you still feel tired. Get a doctor for yourself. But remember this, Coper. You spill any information to the Reds an' you'll be run outa the regiment before dark."

It was useless to argue. One glance at Brock's pale blue eyes told him that. They started at a gallop, Brock leading the way off the trail and into a steep ravine. It was dangerous riding, and Coper had never been much of a horseman. Sugar Baby led the way. In the short intervals of speech made possible by going too rough for galloping, Brock laboriously explained that they must beat the Red regiment to the railroad crossing, as that was the only authorized gateway through the fenced range.

They made it, but behind them the dust was close, the advance guard of the column just hidden by a dip to the north. Their tired horses' hoofs clunked against the steel rails. The railroad tank was just before them.

Sugar Baby slowed. Her reins were drooping. And as she came to the tank, Joe Brock knew that he could go no farther. Never.

He knew he was going to die, that the blood he had had in him was almost gone. And that, with its going, came this great clarity of life, this last clear picture of all of it behind him and the seconds before him.

"Coper, I'm all in—for once in my life, from ridin' a horse. I'll wait for them here like you wanted . . . It's a clear trail now, the one we came out on."

Coper stopped, concerned. "I better stay with you."

Brock said: "In a minute they'll see you. Ride like hell. You got valuable information. You can't help me none."

"Okay," Coper said. "Want me to lead your horse in?"

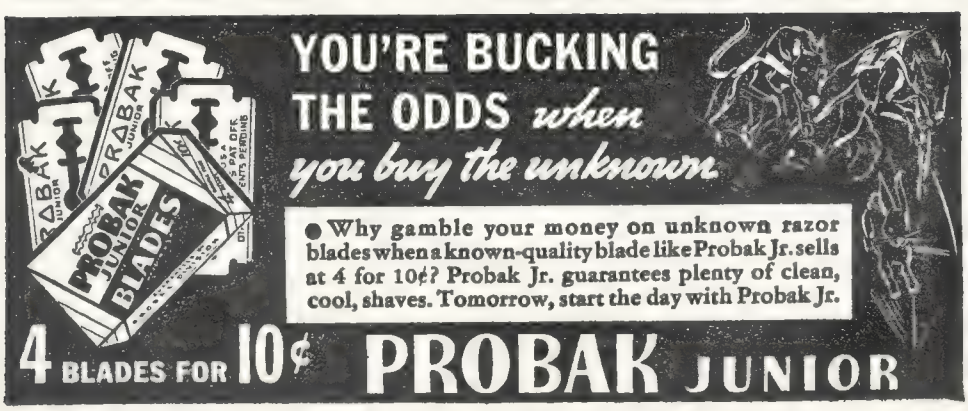
Brock smiled faintly. "She an' me been through a lot together. I guess as long as I get captured she don't mind. Red oats taste jest as good as Blue."

"Anything special I should tell the colonel? Maybe I missed something."

Joe Brock laughed. He slid off Sugar Baby and lay close to the fence, the bight of the reins in his hand. "Tell him he don't have to turn the boys out for that review, an' tell the captain maybe I wouldn't of qualified for Expert, after all. Get it?"

Coper looked back as he rode through the south gate. A guy sets a nasty jab like that and sometimes it makes him light-headed. He grinned and waved.

"Sure, old timer, I get it." He struck his horse with his spurs and tore off with his great news to the south.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The deathly hood weaved and waited.

THE DEVIL IS DEAD

A novelette by H. BEDFORD-JONES

McHARG shook hands blithely and strode out of the club. Martha Brundage glanced after him, and Strong read her eyes. C. O. G. Strong, who owned half Burma, stroked his white mustache and barked out his comment.

"A fine chap. Been out here three years. Knows his way around. But no damned good."

A hard man, Strong; a shrewd man, a cruel man at times, given to positive statements. And positive statements are usually open to suspicion. Strong loved the growl and slash and rending teeth of a good fight, and Aloysius McHarg did not. A constitutional difference, that was all, and Strong disliked him for it. This was odd, because most rough men liked McHarg. Not all, however.

Porky liked him, for one. Porky was an Australian, a bruiser, an ex-pearler who now ran a bar in Rangoon; a straight-talking, hard-hitting ruffian, and no gentleman. It was Porky who had taken the green kid in hand when McHarg first came out, saved him from error and got him a job with the Strong outfit.

Now, leaving the club, McHarg presently wound up for a drink and a chat in Porky's bar. It was his last after-

noon in Rangoon, the last of his two weeks. Like a dream fortnight, to be here in civilization again after the long months up-country, with Brundage the only white man in a hundred miles of head-hunters. Being assistant to Brundage at the trading station up in the Khammur Naga district was no joke. This roar of traffic, the flags, the cars, the clubs and races and hotels—this was new life. Besides, here he was Aloysius McHarg. Back up-country, he was just Nipper.

He sat at a table with Porky, who eyed him with thoroughly concealed affection and hit him with hard, abrupt words. The place was filled with a roaring, laughing mob of men and was blue with smoke and oaths. Porky ran no fine gentleman's bar. Under cover of the general tumult, the two could talk peacefully.

"Something wrong with you. What is it?" said Porky bluntly, watching him with shrewd gaze. "You don't like the trip with that woman. I hear you're taking her back up to join her brother. You don't like Brundage, eh?"

McHarg grimaced slightly. "He's all right in his way."

"Aw, lay off the smooth talk! He's a bull elephant and bad. Spit it out. What's eating at you? Come on, spill it. There's always a cure."

The frontal attack smashed down McHarg's defenses. After all, this man was his friend

"Afraid not, in this case," he said wearily. "The hunters, the company men, the district commissioner who comes over once a month—well, they don't think much of me, Porky. The Hindu trader, the two Chinese, the Arab merchants, all go to Brundage, not to me. The natives are scared of Brundage, not of me."

"Yah! Being scared don't mean respect," growled Porky. "Nipper, they call you. Who started that name?"

McHarg flushed. "You know that, do you? Brundage started it."

"Sure. The others see he ain't got much use for you, and they trail him. Now, you, take it between the eyes! Well built, well made, strong as a horse, you are, and no coward. No coward. But you don't like a showdown. You slip and slide out of a fight. You got brains and you use 'em. Ain't it so?"

McHarg lowered his gaze and nodded.

"True enough, Porky. I don't like a fight; there's no sense in it. I can lead the natives, but Brundage bullies 'em. That's not my style. Blood and shooting? No. There are better ways than brute force."

"Not in a man's world, there ain't," slapped out Porky with decision. "You slip out of a crisis, that's it. I've seen it a long while back. When did you last have a stand-up and knock-down fight, me lad?"

"Never. That is, not since I was in school."

"I thought as much. Take this straight, now!" The other leaned forward. "And Gawd help you if you miss it! You got to learn one thing right: that you can hit and hurt, that any person, any thing, is vulnerable. *That there's nobody can't be hurted.* Let it sink in; let it stick like a burr to your brain. Too damned sensitive!"

McHarg nodded gloomily. Sensitive, yes, too damned much imagination. When one fingers a gun, it doesn't pay to have imagination that outruns the bullet and shrinks from the consequences.

Suddenly he started from his abstraction.

"Nipper! Nipper! Here, you damned pup!"

Porky had turned and was roaring out the words. McHarg sat staring, frowning, flushing, until he realized what it was all about. Porky was calling a dog —a dog, by that name!

The animal came cringing forward,

obviously frightened stiff of Porky and yet not daring to disobey. What a creature he was, to be found here in Rangoon of all places! A pop-eyed, twist-tailed Boston bull, no less. Young but nearly full grown, scrawny and thin, collarless, abject and ungainly, huge jaws open and tongue hanging. He shot looks of terror at Porky, crawled forward, and waited to be beaten.

"Yah!" A snort of contempt came from the man. "There, take him along, McHarg. A cur that ain't worth a damn; maybe you can make something of him. Present for you, with my compliments. Drop in and see me next time you come down, and good luck."

He rose, shook hands and went lurching away.

McHarg had no chance to refuse. The word stung him; the fact that Porky had named this dog Nipper, it was significant. He leaned over and patted the ugly head. Kindness, eh? Why, the poor little tyke would have a hell of a life with Porky!

Yielding to impulse, McHarg rose and walked out of the place with the dog. Behind, Porky's shrewd gaze followed him speculatively.

McHarg took the dog to his hotel room, fed and fondled him, watched him scuttle about in cavorting playfulness after his bath. When McHarg took off his belt, the pup went cringing into a corner. So Porky had beaten him with a belt, eh?

"Here, Nipper!" McHarg laughed suddenly. "Nipper! You'll keep the name, by glory!"

Nipper came and tongued his hand, stared from his popping eyes, grinned with his absurdly huge mouth. Starved for kindness as for food. McHarg gave him both, not quite realizing his own impulse of protection, born from the very appeal of this infinitely worthless creature to his own heart.

ON the next morning, C. O. G. Strong haw-hawed with derision when he brought Miss Brundage to the train, turning her over to McHarg's keeping for the trip up-country. He glared at the pup and spoke his blunt mind.

"A more damned useless thing to take into the hills, I never saw! He'll be at the mercy of everything. Good lord, McHarg, are you out of your mind? Any kind of terrier would do; but this—this grinning caricature! How long d'ye think he'll remain alive up there?"

Porky's talk was lingering in McHarg's brain. Evasion, always evasion? Evasion be damned! He gave Strong one quick, direct, angry look.

"Probably ten years," he replied coldly. "Maybe more."

Strong grunted with surprised resentment. Then Martha Brundage chipped in, petting Nipper and settling him comfortably in the compartment. She knew enough about Burma to know that Strong was dead right. So did McHarg, but stuck by his guns. So the guard whistled, the train jerked, and C. O. G. Strong was left behind them.

During this journey, the three of them got well acquainted. McHarg was shy, but no shyness could long endure with Martha Brundage.

If she had the confident air, the almost brutally frank tongue, of her brother, she also had the most disarming smile in the world, the sunniest dark eyes, the most charming of impulses. None of your calculating women playing for effect, but quick to fire or laughter; one of those rare beings who light everything around them with a gladsome eagerness.

She liked Nipper, and showed it, although not blinking the truth that he was the very last sort of dog anyone would want to take up-country. Any shaggy village cur would rip him to pieces in five minutes.

So they reached the railhead, left the

train, and civilization began to fall away into the background. Two smart little half-Malay *syces,* house servants whom Brundage had sent down, were waiting with riding and pack animals. Martha had a world of luggage along, as might be expected. Before it was stowed, McHarg wished they had a dozen servants instead of two.

They struck straight out for the hills and the Khammur Naga country.

There was one excellent quality about Nipper; he obeyed like a shot. This rather alleviated his nuisance value, for he was given to a mad, wild chase of everything in sight. Not that his teeth could do much damage, but when he gripped a thing he did like to hang on. And he could grip like death itself.

That first afternoon they ran into Minchen on the road, unexpectedly.

Minchen was assistant commissioner in the Naga district. He was a pink-cheeked, bright-eyed young Englishman, filled with the spirit of authority, and just now bound for Rangoon on leave. He was overjoyed to meet Brundage's sister.

"But I say, Nipper, where did you get the dog?" he exclaimed.

"The name is McHarg, if you're speaking to me. Quite a dog, eh? How did you guess his name was Nipper?"

Minchen flushed a trifle with embarrassment. He quite got the point, as he also caught the curious glance Martha Brundage shot at McHarg.

"Oh, I say!" he said awkwardly. "What a ghastly face the brute has, eh? By the way, will you tell Brundage to keep an eye out over your way for two beggars who've done some looting up in the ruby concession district? Frenchmen. If they show up, send word in to the commissioner. They may turn up anywhere. Just got the word as I was leaving."

"I'll remember it," said McHarg. "Anything left in the dak-bungalow at Susol, or did you clean it out in passing?"

Minchen grinned. "Still a fowl or two, I fancy. That *babu* in charge needs jerking up, though. Frightfully glad to have met you! See you when I return. I'll be over."

McHarg rode on with his party. After a little, Martha Brundage gave him a glance and a smile.

"Nice chap, that. You know, I thought for a moment he addressed you as 'Nipper'."

"His mistake," said McHarg shortly. Then he brightened, looked at her with a laugh. "Bosh! Why lie about it? Your brother fastened the name on me. You know, I've been wondering about something. Remember our luncheon with Strong? He said a queer thing, but true, that's stuck in my mind. He said I'd never discovered that people and things were vulnerable. I'm not one of these heroic fighting chaps, you know; I can't recall ever being in a fight since I was in school."

"Too many brains?" she said. He frowned quickly.

"Perhaps. You're poking fun now?"

"I think not." She met his wide, clear gaze for a moment. "Do you know, Mr. McHarg, I fancy we'll prove very good friends."

They fell into talk of intimate things, dreams and younger days and odd incidents and people. McHarg touched on heads, and knowing the natives well, became ethusiastic on the subject. These Nagas up around the Khammur district were old hands at the game. They still sneaked heads when the chance offered.

"But not as you'd think," he said, earnestly. "Only an enemy's head will do, or that of some one not in the village, some strong chap. They think the head lends force and strength to the whole tribe. Like some savages who eat the heart of an enemy; not that they like heart, but they believe it lends them vigor, spiritual strength. These Nagas used to be keen for white heads, and still have some hidden away. Not that

there's the least danger, these days."

She laughed, dimpling rosily. "I'm not worried, I assure you! Any snakes up there?"

"Yes." He looked worried. Snakes always brought that look to his face. "King cobras aren't rare. I'm scared stiff of them. Gives me a shiver even to see the things in a cage. Glad to say I never met one on the loose. I like smoked heads much better. There's something understandable in t h a t theory; the soul-force is in the head, and if the head of a strong man's brought into the village and cured, all the village shares in new energy. Nothing to snakes, especially cobras, except what we don't understand. They're technically deaf, you know, and hear by ultra-sonant vibrations t h r o u g h the tongue—"

McHarg could talk, with her; usually he hardly talked at all, except with natives, whom he knew rather intimately. He was a mine of information on odd matters.

In fact, she robbed the journey of all its hatefulness; he detested going back to Brundage, but her presence was a blessing. He detested Brundage, too. That was one reason he had a separate *kampong*—very good thing now, too, for she would share the compound and bungalow of Brundage, naturally. McHarg would be glad of his own place again. He had his own things there, and some of them were queer things enough, but his own. Like the two Malay servants he had taken on. Not many Malays among the half savage Nagas, and it was not everyone who could get on with the Malays, either; singular little people, deceptively submissive, with a deep and fierce pride. Brundage, for instance, could get nowhere with them, though his dominance was vastly admired by the Nagas.

It was a long day's journey to the government rest house. They made it toward sunset. The *babu* in charge, a Calcutta Hindu, scurried about to make the place presentable. The two *syces*, servants, cooks, jacks of all trades, were invaluable; they were of a hill Malay people, pleasant and courteous. Dinner went off well, and McHarg sought his own room and couch, dead tired. Nipper slept on the foot of his bed. He doused his candle, which drew moths, and undressed by the light of his electric flashlight, an indispensible companion of the night trails.

Over his bed hung a queer object some traveler had left in the place. It was a whip, a cruel thing with a stocky braided hide grip and a flexible wire length. When McHarg touched it curiously, Nipper shrank into himself, cringed, darted terrified looks around. McHarg laughed, petted the dog into happiness again, and switched off the light. He was asleep in two minutes.

Yap-yap-yap-*yap!*

McHarg wakened, sat up, reached for his flashlight. The dog was barking; the excited, frenzied, savage note in the barks brought McHarg wide awake on the instant. His light flashed on. He saw a sight that positively paralyzed him.

There across the room a king cobra was upreared, weaving its inflated, angry hood in the air. Nipper was darting in and out, feinting attack, while that deathly hood weaved and waited to strike. McHarg found voice, frantic. At his call, Nipper only waxed the more savagely intent. The fool dog did not have sense enough to know he was baying certain death. Probably those popeyes of his could not see clearly what sort of victim he had treed. Another moment and he was done for.

McHarg leaped out of his cot. He had no weapon. His fear for the dog was overwhelming; it gripped him with horrible force. Sobbing out incoherent curses, he caught the whip from the wall and swung it, lashed out full swing at the weaving death. By sheer mad luck,

the cruel wire thong slashed about the neck below the hood, and at McHarg's jerk the head was nearly severed.

Nipper hurled in, got a death-grip on the thrashing coils, and settled down ferociously to his job. He was still at it when the two *syces* came running in. McHarg was trembling, bathed in sweat, trying vainly to get the dog loose. But the king cobra was dead.

It was the first lesson in vulnerability.

CHAPTER II

"A BRAVE FOOL . . ."

McHARG brought the whip away with him. As a potential weapon, it delighted him. Here was something that did not provoke his imagination, like a pistol did. He could grasp this, could gauge its effect to his own will and desire.

Nipper did not like that whip. He soon found it was not for him, and ceased to cringe, but kept a wary eye on it none the less.

Before they were an hour on the road, a village mongrel three times the size of Nipper came along; with a snarl and a yap and a whirl of dust, the two were at it. McHarg dismounted. He flung himself on the two animals, frantically, ineffectually, beating at them, his one thought to save Nipper from slashing extermination. His hands and arms were bleeding, when he heard Martha's voice, cool and capable.

"I have your pup. Get a grip on that big brute if you can."

She had Nipper by the legs. McHarg got his whip-stock between the slashing jaws of the mongrel and gripped the animal's head. But Nipper, teeth locked in the shaggy fur, would let go for nothing. One of the *syces* pried his jaws apart and he got a fresh hold before Martha Brundage could jerk him clear. At length she got him away, however.

Then the mongrel, red-eyed, came for McHarg like a flash. The whip-butt knocked him away, and the lash came down on him. The dog yowled, took another vicious cut, then turned tail and streaked away, yelping.

"I like this whip; it goes in," said McHarg, panting, bright-eyed, exultant. "Is Nipper hurt much?"

"Cut up a bit. Better get some iodine on your own cuts," Martha said. "I have some in my bag."

Nipper licked his own hurts, licked McHarg's hands, and Martha applied the iodine.

"You certainly took chances," she said, "jumping at those brutes as you did!"

"Never thought about it," McHarg said. "I was so furious at this fool pup I could have killed him. He hasn't the sense of a sparrow."

He caressed the dog, swearing at him, and Nipper stretched his enormous mouth in a grin. After this, McHarg kept him on a long cord in lieu of leash, mothered him, bathed his slashed hide when they halted. He was watchful, alert every moment lest Nipper go plunging into some new disaster.

They had three more days on the road, which in due course dwindled to a mere hill trail.

By this time they were quite definitely friends. Martha Brundage had a quiet poise, a sense of justice, which her brother lacked; beneath her impulsive frankness were deep places, too. McHarg learned about the chap who had died, two years back, and he vaguely comprehended that her very telling about it was an admittance to equality, an admission of liking, of friendship. He had wondered why such a girl was not married; now he knew.

And, what with practising on brush and leaves and branches, McHarg was becoming a very good shot with that whip.

On their last morning out, a scant twenty miles from their destination, they

came very abruptly on the debonair Peter Woods.

He was sitting beside the trail, broiling a bird on a spit over a tiny, smokeless fire. At sight of them he sprang up in astonishment and delight, and swept off his battered topee. A tall, lithe, lean man, his garments torn and stained, who bore himself with a jaunty air. His black-mustached face was brown and hard, deeply lined, but he had an infectious laugh, a gay voice and reckless, brilliant dark eyes that danced with inner fires. McHarg, who was in the lead, drew rein. Nipper ran to the stranger, was patted, and made friends instantly.

"Well!" exclaimed McHarg in astonishment. "And who may you be?"

The other flourished his sun-helmet and bowed to the girl.

"Peter Woods, dear sir and madam, at your service," he exclaimed. A resonant voice, reckless and wild as the dark eyes. "I fear you have me at a disadvantage. You are not, I fancy, of the police?"

"Hardly," said McHarg, giving his name and presenting Woods to the girl. "A bit strange to find you here all alone."

"Undoubtedly," and with a cheerful smile, Peter Woods explained. "You see, I was on my way up to do some topographical work, and two rascals held me up this morning. Two accursed French thieves, who stole everything I had and made off."

"Hello!" said McHarg eagerly. "Two Frenchmen, eh? The same Minchen spoke about, Martha! Which way did they go?"

Mr. Woods was regrettably vague on this point, because they had taken his horses and plunged off the trail. His servants had gone in search of a village, and he himself was awaiting their return, which was unaccountably delayed.

"Luckily I dropped a pigeon," he said, quite gayly, "and was about to have a bite to eat when you showed up. Perhaps you'll join me?"

Martha Brundage laughed. "No, but we can supply you with some food. And if you'll join us, we can give you a lift—"

"A thousand thanks, but I must await my servants here," said Woods, eyeing her with open admiration. "May I ask whether you live in this district?"

Martha talked with him while McHarg had some food broken out. He was extravagant, debonair, almost impudent, and quite charming. When they said farewell, McHarg rode on frowningly, silent, until Martha Brundage rallied him on his preoccupation.

"Eh? Oh, that chap back yonder," he exclaimed at her question. "Didn't you realize that his whole yarn was a lie? Spoke like a gentleman. Probably some rascal off on his own—"

"Rascal?" she broke in. "A lie? What on earth makes you think that?"

"No horse sign in the road," McHarg said shortly. "The next village is only four miles on; his servants, if he had any, would have been there and back long since. No one was ahead of us on the road, or we'd have known it. Last, he had a pistol in his jacket; the pocket sagged. He'd have held us up if he dared. He sprang that yarn, probably having heard about these two Frenchmen, and got some grub off us, and is on his way somewhere this minute."

"Upon my word! Are you sure? Why, Nipper took to him right off, and you know that a dog—"

"Bosh!" cut in McHarg rudely. "That fool pup would make friends with the devil himself. A dog's like a woman; they'll fall for a smooth tongue and a pat on the head."

"You're rather glib about it," said Martha tartly. "If you thought he was such a rascal, why didn't you do something?"

"I'm no policeman. If the poor rogue has broken jail or something, why should I bother? The natives will take his head

quick enough if they run across him."

"Are you serious?" she asked, regarding him narrowly. "Do you mean these natives, where we live, would actually take white men's heads?"

"If they caught a white man alone in the jungle, why not? Certainly they would, if they took the notion. They're not going to do anything that'd bring the police down on them, of course, but they'd take a chance quick on some hunted rat like that chap."

"Well, whatever you say, he was a gentleman."

"He was not," said McHarg.

"At least, if he's what you think, he has the courage to buck the jungle and hills and natives all by himself. I doubt if you'd do it."

"I'd have too much sense," McHarg snapped.

"You'd better be more like your dog, then, and less like yourself. A brave fool is better than a wise craven, any day."

"Thanks," said McHarg bitterly. "A woman's always safe in calling a man a coward."

She flushed at this, then paled.

"I'm sorry; forgive me. That was unjust and I didn't mean it."

"You did, and I don't blame you." McHarg's face cleared. He nodded to her amiably. "I've called myself a coward, often enough. No doubt I am. Well, suppose we forget it all. I'll be seeing your brother soon enough."

SHE did not know what he meant by this, but she found out when they got in, that afternoon.

Brundage was bull-necked and aggressive, very efficient, riding roughshod over anything and anyone in his way; a dark, heavy-jowled man, with a laugh that did not always spell mirth. He was large, powerfully built, and had the strength of three.

A shadow fell upon McHarg's spirit the moment they rode into the compound.

"Hello, Nipper! Well, sis of all people! Didn't expect you until next month!" Brundage came forth, hearty, delighted. His attitude of tolerant contempt toward McHarg went deep, of a sudden, and McHarg quietly effaced himself. He took Nipper and went to his own bungalow at the rear of the compound, behind the store, where his Malays had arranged a separate compound for him. Brundage had the big compound and bungalow across from the store.

When McHarg walked in, with Nipper ranging behind him, he halted in amazement. His two Malays were there, scowling, surly, without more than bare greeting.

And someone else was here in the main room—Hamed ben Yusuf, the Arab trader, seated on a mat in the center of the floor and dictating accounts to a half-caste scribe. The Arab looked up, touched brow, lips and breast with murmured salaam, and went on with his work.

"Get out of here," said McHarg. Hamed looked up again, a slight smile touching his bearded lips. His calm contempt that ignored all orders was insufferable.

"Tuan," he said, "I was told to work here by Tuan Brundage—"

Something in the bearded hawk-face reminded McHarg of the poised cobra's weaving head and hood. He was scarcely conscious of his own motion, his action. This insolence from an Arab was past bearing.

Hamed ben Yusuf screamed in mingled rage and pain as the whip-thong swept across his face and breast. He came erect like a spring uncoiled, a knife bared in his hand. McHarg chopped with the whip, as at the end of a branch. The cruel thong looped about the bare brown wrist and arm, cut into the flesh, and Hamed screamed again as the knife clattered down. Then he went out of

the bungalow with a rush, and his clerk after him.

McHarg looked at the astounded Malays, whose faces had cleared of scowls.

"Throw out everything belonging to that rascal. Bring in my things from the horses."

They grinned and made haste. McHarg took Nipper on into his bedroom, glanced around and saw that his own things were intact, and awaited the storm.

It came swiftly. Brundage strode in like a thundercloud and halted. McHarg held a light to his cigarette and nedded pleasantly.

"What is the news?" he asked, in the customary Malay formula of greeting.

"The news is good," returned Brundage mechanically, then flushed. "Why, damn you, what d'you mean talking Malay to me? What d'you mean, kicking Hamed out of here? Nipper, you'd better change your tune in a hurry—"

"That's Nipper there," and McHarg pointed to the dog on the bed. "My name's McHarg, to you."

"My God! Are you drunk, or gone off your head?"

McHarg smiled, though his heart was pounding furiously.

"Let's clear the record, Brundage," he said. "I've had enough of your tolerance and contempt; now you've gone too far. As long as we're both here, you'll show a proper respect for me, as a white man, before the natives. This compound is mine, and not company property."

Brundage was well aware that he had overstepped; but it infuriated him that McHarg should resent it. He came close, a savage glare in his eyes.

"You damned milksop, you dare to talk that way to me? Why, I'll take you apart and then kick what's left to roost in the native village! I'll wring that damned neck of yours if you don't apoligize and do it quick. You're all done here!"

"Better get yourself in hand," said McHarg quietly. "You know how strict orders are about preserving harmony in front of natives. As for being done, that's bosh. You've no authority to hire and fire."

Brundage cursed softly but luridly. His eyes were fastened on McHarg, narrowed, savage. Silently, McHarg drew the flexible thong of the whip through his fingers, with significant gesture, his gaze steady.

"You damned little—"

He shot out a hand to grasp the whip. McHarg brought down the butt, heavily. With a howl of fury, Brundage grasped his forearm with his left hand and danced in pain.

"Blast you! Broken my arm—"

"Not this time," said McHarg, flushing. Vulnerable, by the lord! Even Brundage was vulnerable! "Clear out of here, unless you want what Hamed got."

He knew instantly that the challenge was a mistake, and pallor came into his cheeks. Brundage started for him, then checked himself. The two Malays were in the room, fetching McHarg's grips and belongings. Even so, Brundage hung fire for a moment, but orders were orders. White prestige must be upheld at every cost. The company was stern as the devil about it; not even a quarrel was permitted before native eyes. The man who lost his head in that way was all washed up as quickly as C. O. G. Strong got wind of it.

"We'll settle this tomorrow." Brundage choked down his wrath. "You'll learn who's giving orders here, or I'll put a bullet into you! Mind that, my man. And be over for dinner at the usual time, for the sake of appearances."

"Appearances be damned," said McHarg calmly. "I'm not eating with you. Have a family dinner with your sister and leave me out. I'll drop over after dinner; no use letting her see anything is wrong."

"As you like," growled Brundage. "I'll

not be there after dinner. Got word this afternoon that if I get over to that Naga village on the ridge, seven miles across, sometime this evening, I can pick up several smoked heads they'd like to get rid of. We have a standing offer for them from several museums, and I'm riding over tonight."

"Morning would be safer," said McHarg. The other sneered.

"Yes, that sounds like you! This is something has to be grabbed tonight. One of the villagers tipped me off; he's going with me. You come over later and keep Martha entertained, blast you! I'll entertain you tomorrow, right enough."

So Brundage went striding out, and McHarg never saw him again; tomorrow was an eternity away.

McHARG dined, none too well; hitherto, he had shared commissariat with Brundage, but his Malays rose to the occasion after a fashion. They were quite fascinated by Nipper's ungodly looks and friendliness.

His meal finished, McHarg staked out the dog on his long cord in the compound and went into the Naga village. He had undertaken some small commissions in Rangoon for Chunda Das, the Hindu trader; and coming to the compound of Chunda, McHarg was presently seated with the Hindu, smoking and chatting briefly. Drums were going and singsong voices lifting in the village and he inquired the reason.

"Only the gods know. These savages have been stirred up of late; it is the planting season and they propitiate their false gods for good crops," said Chunda contemptuously.

He regarded the Chinese, the Arab, and the Nagas as infidels and savages. The Chinese traders regarded him and the others with equal disdain. Hamed ben Yusuf looked down his nose at all of them as infidels and barbarians accursed of Allah, so the matter was rather equal. Yet the Nagas were not so bad. Barbaric enough, but industrious folk who raised excellent crops and put money in the traders' pockets.

"There is a matter you should know," Chunda Das said. "Those two banderlog who serve you, those Malay monkey folk, tried to keep that accursed Arab dog out of your house, and Brundage Sahib beat them. It is not a good thing to beat the monkey people, *sahib*. These two have taken wives from the village, and like all monkeys have a certain pride."

"I will straighten things out, Chunda Das. Thanks for telling me."

McHarg went to the Brundage bungalow, more angry than he cared to admit. A Malay does not look up to much, but to beat him is a tactical error of some magnitude. Brundage had no business doing it anyway.

He found Brundage gone, and Martha alone, and settled down comfortably with her to talk of everything anew. Brundage had given her no inkling of any trouble with his assistant; he had, however, observed that he expected to make use of her in getting his accounts straightened out. At this, McHarg chuckled.

"You know, we make a perfect team, Martha, your brother and I. Accounts are pie for me, so I usually handle all the books and reports, while he takes care of the mean jobs. Such as his job tonight, for example. I'd think twice before trying to barter these Nagas out of any smoked heads, even heads that had served their purpose and grown weak in force, as these chaps look at it. Ticklish business, let me tell you. It takes nerve to walk in on these fellows and walk out with their tribal gods. They're not above putting a spear into anybody who plays horse with their religious beliefs, such as they are. Your brother does it magnificently."

She laughed. "Yes, he's splendid; but he was always a bit weak on figures. By

The whip poised for another blow

the way, he had a notice from the district commissioner to look out for those two Frenchmen we heard about. They committed murder and robbery up in the hills, in the Bayak ruby district, and are supposed to be making for the Indo-Chinese border and French territory. Their names are Jacques Falaise and Pierre Dubois."

McHarg sat up suddenly, staring at her in abrupt dismay.

"Good lord! Pierre Dubois! Why—why, that explains everything!"

"As how?" Her brows lifted. "What is there to explain?"

"That chap we met this morning!" McHarg was excited. "Pierre Dubois—Peter Woods, of course! He had left his partner somewhere and was scouting for something to eat; probably the two of them were half starved. Perhaps his partner was right there and kept out of sight. And he had the nerve to tell us that two Frenchmen had robbed him!"

"You may be right," she agreed slowly. "In fact, you must be right. What are you going to do about it?"

"Right now, nothing. It's up to your brother to send word to the commissioner. I don't know whether I would or not. Those chaps may be criminals, sure, but I hate raising the hue and cry,

starting a man-hunt—" He broke off with a shrug.

"You've changed, since I met you," she observed, smiling. "It was a good thing for you to get that dog."

"Nipper?" He gave her a look. "I don't know. It's not that. Well, I suppose it was a bit of everything," he concluded lamely. His face darkened at thought of Brundage and the things that must be cleared up between them.

He dreaded the morrow. He still dreaded it when he turned in, later, with Nipper at his feet. Yet at thought of Brundage dancing around and holding his wrist, he was a bit relieved. The man was vulnerable. Anyone was vulnerable, as a matter of fact; it was a surprising but comforting thought. He had to thank Porky for it, for a good deal.

With morning, the whole course of his life was changed.

CHAPTER III

BLOOD ON THE SADDLE

McHARG was finishing his breakfast when Martha Brundage broke in upon him. Her brother had not returned. And McHarg wasted no time lying to her about it; he knew at once that something must have happened, something unexpected and unpleasant.

He questioned the servants, his own two Malays, went to the *godowns* and store, went into the village. Most of the men were in the fields, for the planting was going on. He was totally unable to learn anything about the villager who had gone over with Brundage to the Naga village on the ridge. While he was still questioning, the horse Brundage had ridden came in, with blood on the saddle.

McHarg called in some of the men, who were hunters, and sent them out, offering rewards for news of Brundage. He himself rode over to the village seven miles away; but as he feared, his trip was fruitless. The Nagas there knew nothing about Brundage, had not seen him, and had no heads they desired to give up. McHarg judge them honest, but somebody had lied. He was up against a blank.

When he got back home, there was news of the worst. Hunters had found the body of Brundage and had brought it in. Just the body. Not the head. That was gone. And when he had gone over the situation, McHarg found himself helpless to lay any blame at any door. The police would have to do this. He sat down and wrote a note to the commissioner, and also mentioned Peter Woods. He sent off the note by one of the servants. It might be days before it brought results, of course, even if it found the commissioner at home. With the assistant gone on leave, the note might chase him all over the district.

Martha Brundage was alone with her shock and grief.

McHarg sought Chunda Das, who sent one of his sons to act as clerk. Until now, McHarg had done the clerical work; he must carry on otherwise until somebody was sent up from Rangoon to replace Brundage. By noon, he was at work getting his report in shape, and before the afternoon was far gone, Aloysius McHarg was facing a decision that left him aghast.

For the accounts were definitely off, by so many rupees that it was no joke at all. There was no mistake about it. The books were juggled. Brundage had simply been short about a thousand rupees.

McHarg, shocked but not in the least grieved by the fate of his superior, sent away his new clerk and faced the matter himself. His report had to go in at once, with word of Brundage's death, to Rangoon. He had to sign it. And it was a very, very simple matter to send

in the accounts exactly as they were; it was the thing to do; it was, McHarg knew, the thing he should properly do. But, queerly, he could not make up his mind to do it. The very fact of his own past ill-feeling toward Brundage checked him. And there was Martha to think about.

He evaded the decision long enough to bury Brundage, with Martha and the servants and half the Nagas of the village looking on, and the traders. He read the funeral service and saw that everything was done right; it was not a matter that admitted of delay. There was no grief for Brundage, no stir caused by his death, for death came to all men. However, Hamed ben Yusuf and Chunda Das and the two Chinese traders were most uneasy. If a white head was taken, anything would be possible.

Martha went back to her bungalow, shaken but holding up outwardly with brave heart. McHarg went back to the store and put his head in his hands, with Nipper sniffing about, and fought out the matter. Reading the funeral service had not helped things a bit. He had the queer conviction that to do his simple duty would be to take horrible advantage of a dead man. It would damn the memory of Brundage unavoidably; it would hurt and damage Martha Brundage. It would make himself feel like a dog, McHarg thought. He had detested, even hated, Brundage alive; but Brundage dead commanded his loyalty.

The only alternative was to hold his peace and make up the shortage, which would just about clean out his meager savings. He did it. He wrote and signed the report, got all clear, and arranged for a man to take it down-country and get it into the post with the morning. And that was off his mind.

He invited Martha to dinner, but she preferred to be alone. Talking with his two Malays, McHarg learned from them that men in the village must certainly have taken the head of Brundage. The man who had started for that other village with Brundage must have thought up the whole scheme. It was not unusual for a Naga to devote himself to the good of the community, to risk punishment for the sake of obtaining a head that would increase the crops and benefit the whole village.

McHarg offered a big reward for the discovery of this man, but the Malays said it would probably be impossible to find the party. Trim in their sarongs and jackets, jaws working on betel paste, they gave him no hope. The police might do it, of course; that was the business of the commissioner.

After dinner he looked in on Martha. She was over the worst of it now. He discussed things with her, calmly; ways and means, plans, the immediate future. When she spoke of her brother, horror sat in her eyes. The thought of his head, in some native hut or out in a tree overlooking some field, as was the Naga custom, broke her down. McHarg comforted her, temporized, promised she would yet see her brother's head laid to rest with the body. Queer, he thought, how much weight she attached to this. It was natural, but it was queer just the same. Brundage certainly would not care a hang whether his head were being smoked or looking over a field with crows pecking at it. But this girl cared a lot.

McHarg went home. He was about to turn in, when Nipper flew into a frenzied barking. McHarg caught a scratching at his door, and opened it. Tock Lung, one of the Chinese merchants, slipped into the room and stood blinking at him, panting, fearful while the dog sniffed at his feet.

"What is the news?" said McHarg in Malay.

"Tuan, it is bad. Do you know the man Ng Karam?"

McHarg nodded. One of the hunters in the village, a surly fellow who lived

alone, a man too old to have wives, since he had no money or land.

"Ng Karam came to me tonight," said Tock Lung. "He wanted credit with which to buy a woman. He offered me a pistol in exchange. It was the pistol of Tuan Brundage with the silver plate on the butt. I told him to come back in the morning."

"Go home and say nothing," McHarg told him. "If there is a reward, it is yours."

The Chinese departed. McHarg stood motionless, a pulse throbbing at his temple, his breath coming short.

Ng Karam was the man, of course. It had never occurred to his savage mind that the pistol looted from Brundage would fasten the murder on him. He had the head of Brundage now. And the pistol.

McHarg wiped the sweat from his palms. There were two or three ways of handling this thing; one was to report to the commissioner, who might come in a week. Another was to take all the servants, arm them, and move in to the attack at once. It should be done at once. But Brundage would have gone right to the compound of Ng Karam, alone, on the spot, in the darkness. McHarg shrank from this, shrank horribly, until he remembered almost the last words Brundage had said to him. Morning would be safer, he had said, and Brundage had sneered at him.

"Yes, that sounds like you! This is something has to be grabbed off tonight—"

"Tonight, at once," muttered McHarg, glancing around frantically. "She would want it done, too. If she knew about it, she would go herself, go like a shot. There's no way out of it. If I take the Malays, the whole damned village would be up in arms. If I go alone, it's between me and Ng Karam, maybe. That's the chance, anyhow. If I could only wait till morning—"

He could not, and knew he could not. He wiped his palms again; his hands were cold, clammy. The thought of that village at night, that hut in the compound, was terrible. But there was no one else to do it, unless he let Martha Brundage do it.

WITH a deep, quick breath he caught up his flashlight and reached for the whip that was in the corner. The gnarled brown figure of Ng Karam rose before his mind's eye, surly features, spear and old rifle, a dark corded figure of lean muscle. Vulnerable, yes; even a hunter of tigers was vulnerable. Even an Arab was vulnerable, as the knife of Hamed ben Yusuf was there to prove.

A feeling of suffocation possessed him, as he strode out and left Nipper behind. His imagination flew on and on. Even if he got the head, the bare thought of carrying it home himself was horrible. He strode on, the flashlight winking before him.

He was past the bazars and in the village now. There could be no secrecy; the dogs knew him, but barked savagely until they caught his scent. The little compound of Ng Karam was apart from the others at the edge of the village.

McHarg came to it, sent the light in ahead of him, and sent his voice also. He stooped and went into the hut, which was large enough inside. Movement and voices were stirring all through the village.

The light caught the uncoiling, rising figure of Ng Karam, hand on rifle.

"Sit down," said McHarg abruptly. The hunter hesitated, then squatted respectfully. "I have come to speak with you. There is a present of cloth and tobacco and other things for you tomorrow at the store, enough with which to buy a woman."

The dark figure, blinking into the ray of light, relaxed a little. McHarg fingered the whip and stirred it along the floor.

"There is something else. The voice of Tuan Brundage came to me this evening. He was very angry. He was collecting all the devils from the jungle to move in upon this village, and chiefly upon you, Ng Karam. You will be paralyzed in every limb, and your hand will shake so that you cannot use a gun or a spear, and no woman will enter your door. So, because we are friends, you and I, here I am to help you and protect you."

"There is no need," muttered the hunter.

"There is great need," McHarg said with emphasis. "Tomorrow you will be paralyzed, and a curse will lie upon the fields and the planting, and the devils will uproot everything. The voice of Tuan Brundage will not help this village but will bring all the devils down upon it. The only way to avoid this, and to obtain the present that is waiting for you, is to give me the pistol of Tuan Brundage, and also his head."

"I think that voice lied to you," said the hunter, but most uneasily.

"It did not lie. Instead, it said that if you refused I was to use his whip upon you as I did upon Hamed ben Yusuf. It is a whip inhabited by a devil, and it eats the heart and soul out of a man whom it strikes, and takes his courage away. So now stand up, Ng Karam, and I will show you what happens—"

"There is no need," said Ng Karam hastily. "The pistol is here under the mat, and the head is hanging over the fireplace in a wicker bag."

McHarg was a trifle surprised at this ready conquest, but there was a reason. As it was no question of crime and punishment, but rather of man to man friendship, Ng Karam did not hesitate to speak very freely; for indeed he was conscious of no crime whatever. His ambition to help the village had been laudable, entirely so, but if Brundage was now angry and bringing in all the devils, that was something else again. The fault lay at the door of others, as anyone with ordinary good sense would appreciate; and he felt sure McHarg would so appreciate it.

This was true. McHarg listened with incredulity that became dismayed conviction. All was explained now. Neither Ng Karam nor anyone else in the village would have been eager to kill Brundage, even to get his head. But when someone else had done that job, and the head was there to be taken, that was very different. A mistake, doubtless, since Tuan Brundage was angry about it, but a natural mistake.

"You are right," said McHarg, feeling a little sick. "If he had been an enemy, you would have greatly benefited by having his head; anyone can comprehend this. But he was not an enemy. You took him to his death, and it was a great error. However, let nothing be said about it, and the devils will be appeased. And you shall have your present in the morning."

McHarg knew exactly how the commissioner, in his capacity as magistrate, would look at the affair. This savage was not guilty of any crime, from his viewpoint, and would not be punished. The crime lay elsewhere. So, with the remark that the talk was ended, McHarg took the pistol from under the mat, lifted down the heavy wicker container from above the fireplace, and went out of the hut.

The darkness was peopled with stirrings and voices, but he paid no heed. There was more to be done, and it had to be done now. And he had to do it. Stooping a little under his burden, half in fear at any instant of a spear or arrow from the darkness, he headed back for his own compound. His two Malays lived close to the bazars, and as he passed the house of one, he sent the shaft of light at it and lifted his voice.

"Sebak! Bring Tali and come to my house at once. I have need of you. Do you hear me?"

"It is an order, *tuan,*" came the muffled reply.

McHarg went on, without a shudder by reason of the thing he carried. The darkness was still vivid with terrors for him, sweat was streaming from him.

He came to the compounds at last and was turning in past the store, when from the dark Brundage bungalow came the challenging voice of Martha.

"Is that you, Mr. McHarg? What's up? Nipper has been kicking up a row."

"You—I think you'd better come over," he replied hoarsely. "Can you use a pistol?"

"Of course I can," she rejoined promptly. "Shall I bring mine?"

"Yes, if you will."

He went into his bungalow, where Nipper received him with extravagant joy, and put the pistol and wicker container on the table. Luckily, the wicker gave no sign of what it contained, except for one splotchy stain; he could not have borne to look at the head. It would have turned his stomach completely, he thought.

When he had the lamp going, he flung a blanket over the things on the table, and went to the store, unlocking it. He knew Brundage had a pair of handcuffs there, and he found them, by aid of the flashlight. As he came out, he met Martha Brundage, crossing from her own compound.

"Sorry; I had to get into some clothes," she said. "What's up?"

"I can't tell you at the moment," McHarg said. "Do you understand Malay?"

"No."

"Will you take these and stand by with your pistol?" he said. "I never shot one and wouldn't be much good with it. I don't know just what will happen. I called you in on sheer impulse, you know—"

They came up the steps and into the lighted room. An exclamation broke from her.

"Good heavens! You look like a ghost. What on earth is it?"

"Murder."

"Oh! You can't mean—" She shrank, staring at him. McHarg nodded, wearily. "I think so. Wait and see. Sit down over there. Keep your pistol in hand. If they pull a knife, let 'em have it."

The two Malays came in hastily, and stood at attention. McHarg picked up the whip and nodded to them.

'Take the blanket off the table and look at what lies there."

They moved forward to the table and Sebak pulled off the blanket. They looked at the pistol, at the wicker basket, then up at the eyes of McHarg. A certain fatality came into their brown, flat faces; a resignation, a passive acceptance.

"I have not known you to be liars," McHarg said quietly. "By Allah, men of your blood are not liars! This is well known. Yet you have lied, casting the blame for Tuan Brundage's death upon the people of this village. Why is this?"

They glanced at the wide-eyed girl with the pistol steady in her hand, and back to the calm, level gaze of McHarg. Sebak made reply, without any evasion.

"Tuan, our honor demanded that he should die, because he beat us when you were gone."

"So I have heard," McHarg replied. "And I do not mind telling you that I meant to take up that matter with him in the morning."

"It was our affair, as Allah liveth, *tuan.*"

"Who struck the blow?" McHarg asked. "There was no mark on the body."

"In the head, *tuan.* We both fired together."

McHarg went white as death, glanced at the wicker basket, and shivered. Before this resignation, this complete apathy, he changed all his plans and did not touch the handcuffs in his pocket. He knew these men, and their ways. He

knew that their own notion of honor bound them as no steel could bind them.

"Each of you, put your kris on the table," he said. They produced the flame-bladed steel knives from beneath their sarongs, and laid them down. "If I order you to go to your own houses and stay there until the commissioner arrives, will you do so? Then swear, that your honor may be involved."

They swore by Allah, by the beards of their fathers, by the spirits of their ancestors, that they would obey; and McHarg knew the oath would be kept. They would face the magistrate, speak as they had just now spoken, and if the peculiar justice of the white man punished them for salvaging their honor, they would accept the matter. It was the nature of their people.

Then, at his nod and gesture, they went out. McHarg dropped into a chair, and was aware of the dilated eyes of the girl fastened upon him.

"Well?" she exclaimed. "I don't understand all these. Where are—"

"Those two men murdered your brother," said McHarg wearily. "They admitted it. There was no need of any weapon. They'll be available when the commissioner comes."

He reached down and fondled the head of Nipper, mechanically. Then he met her eyes and smiled a little.

"You took him to his death!"

"Hadn't you better turn in? It's been a hard day for both of us. Very good of you to come over; I thought I might need help, you see."

She rose. "But one thing, tell me; you haven't got—got it back—"

McHarg nodded silently. She sent one frantic, half comprehending glance at the table, and her face went livid. Then she turned and went out of the room. McHarg jumped up, joined her, sent the flashlight beam ahead of them. She did not speak until they were at her bungalow steps and it was then only a low "good night."

"So the job's done," muttered McHarg, coming home again. "By God, it's done! Hardest day of my life; perhaps the best paying. Yes, I've changed, sure. And it's done—"

He was sadly mistaken about that.

CHAPTER IV

A MAN CAN FIGHT

THEY breakfasted together. McHarg had been up and around for some hours. He told her, across the table, that the head of Brundage now lay with the body; and it was safe from molestation. She shivered a little, thanked him with her eyes, and shifted the subject.

"There's something I must tell you," she said. "I was bringing up some cash

for—for him. A thousand rupees. He had used the money here, from the company funds, and now I suppose you had better replace it."

McHarg took the money. He was confused, speechless, taken off guard. She looked him in the eyes and spoke quickly, sharply.

"What is it?"

"The money," he stammered. "I—I've already attended to it. I found the shortage and made it up. You see—well, it's all straight now. I'll just keep this."

Warmth flooded in her face.

"Oh! And you did it because of him, you covered it up—why didn't you tell me?"

"Not yesterday. I might have told you later, of course," he said, flushing. "Really, it didn't matter."

"For him!" she said in a low voice. "You did that because you liked him so!"

McHarg flushed more deeply. Then he revolted against the temptation.

"No, Because I didn't like him. Because we didn't get on at all. We had a row night before last," he exploded sharply. "And that's why. I couldn't let it go that way, I couldn't let everybody think he'd been short and so forth. Just because I didn't like him at all. There, damn it! I suppose you have to know the truth, so take it. I'm sorry. I can't help it."

Conscious that she would be furious with him for this revelation, he rose from the table and walked out. He had Nipper on a short leash, because of wandering village dogs, and went straight over to the store. The son of Chunda Das was there, and so was the hunter Ng Karam, come for his promised present. McHarg rewarded him handsomely and sent him away rejoicing. Then there was the Chinese merchant, Tock Lung, to be fittingly rewarded; McHarg took care of this, also, and went over to his own bungalow to leave Nipper there. His two Malays had come to work as usual, but he had sent them home again, thanks to a natural if unwarranted shrinking from any contact with them.

He took Nipper into the bedroom, told him to stay there, closed the door, and turned to find an amiable stranger holding a pistol on him.

"Do you speak French, *m'sieu?*" asked the stranger affably.

"But yes," blurted McHarg.

"Hands up, then. Turn your back, if you please. Ah, no weapon! Sit down."

Deftly frisked and found unarmed, McHarg confusedly dropped into a chair, staring. Subconsciously, he knew the explanation, yet could not believe it true.

The man was ragged, strained and scratched, blurred with beard; a trim, alert little man very square in the shoulders. His features, beneath their grinning amiability, held a vicious intentness. His eyes glittered unpleasantly upon McHarg.

"Permit me, *m'sieu;* Jacques Falaise," he said. "Ah! You have heard the name, eh? Well, it is no matter. Allow me to reassure you. No harm is intended; we are not robbers. We need clothes, food, horses, and shall pay for what we take. Understand? In fact, we shall pay in advance. Thus."

Tucking his pistol away. Falaise thumbed a little sack of leather from his pocket. McHarg watched, fascinated. He comprehended that this was one of the two Frenchmen so badly wanted by the police. Where was the other, the debonair Peter Woods?

Falaise selected from his little sack a roughly red-flashing stone and laid it down approvingly on the gray blanket that still covered the table. The wicker basket that had been under the blanket was gone; but the pistol of Brundage still reposed beneath that blanket, unguessed. McHarg recalled the fact, and tensed.

"*Tiens!*" said the Frenchman, putting away the sack. "Regard, now; a ruby, my friend. For what we take, it will pay well, eh? You see, we are honorable gentlemen. For the past couple of hours we have been watching your affairs, preparing our descent upon your coasts, as my partner Dubois might say. It is well to have things go off in friendly fashion, with no regrettable mistakes. Do you agree?"

"Certainly," murmured McHarg, dry-lipped. He wondered where Peter Woods might be. The thought of Martha Brundage began to torment him. Falaise put his head on one side and surveyed him, bird-like, the eyes glittering.

"You remember on the trail, when you met Dubois? I ran to hide. Dubois would not hide; he would not give up that pigeon he was cooking. Our only food in three days. And then you gave him food. Ha! I tell you we feasted then; that Dubois, he has a way with the women. Did she not say, afterward, that he was a charming fellow?"

"*Si*," McHarg assented, mechanically. Falaise cackled out a laugh.

"So you do speak French very well, my friend! You know when to say *si* and when to say *oui*; what more could anyone ask? Well, I must take a look around. Do not move from the chair or I shall be forced to become unpleasant. Hello! This is curious."

He picked up McHarg's whip and inspected it, heavy butt and flexible, cruel thong. McHarg watched him dully, conscious of utter futility. The pistol hidden under the blanket was of no use whatever. Before he could get it, this man could shoot him a dozen times over. And he himself had no skill with a pistol. No; best to play safe, accept what came, and get rid of these fellows peacably. They meant no harm. All they wanted was to get away in safety.

Falaise threw open the door of the bedroom. There was a surprised yap from Nipper, a rush, a snarl. Falaise stepped back hurriedly. An oath broke from him; he lashed out with the whip, lashed out again. The dog yelped sharply, cringed away.

McHarg lost his head and came out of the chair like a flash, flinging himself at the man in hot fury. Falaise swung around and struck. The butt of the whip caught McHarg over the eyes, sent a shower of stars across his brain, and he dropped. Nipper edged over to him and licked his face, and rolled frightened eyes at the Frenchman.

"Name of a name! What a face it is!" cackled Falaise in mirth. "It is formidable, this face; a terrific thing, but it does not bite. Here, my friend! I am sorry I hit you. My hand upon it. Me, I am *un brave;* a brave fellow can always apologize."

He patted the dog, and Nipper gratefully wagged his ridiculous broken twist of a tail and licked his hand.

McHARG wakened, dizzy and aching, to find himself in the armchair, tied to it by both wrists. Nipper lay watching him, contentedly. From the bedroom came the voice of Falaise, humming a gay tune; then came the man himself, swaggering, dressed in the new suit of whites McHarg had bought in Rangoon.

"The boots are trifle large, but no harm there," he observed. "Ah! So you are now awake! Well, I warned you. Lucky thing for you we want no shooting to give the alarm, or you'd have a bullet in your gizzard this minute. A handy weapon, this whip. Do you like the blue cravat, or should I have taken the brown one? This is not bad—"

Falaise surveyed himself in the mirror. Then he flashed around, caught up the whip, and darted to the door. Hasty steps outside, a hasty knock. Into the main room burst the son of Chunda Das, the new clerk from the store.

"Sahib! Memsahib Brundage cried out for help. There is a man—"

The whip-stock landed with a sickening thud. The young Hindu toppled over, and Falaise fell upon him. McHarg watched, horrified, as the Frenchman worked fast, binding his victim hand and foot with a towel he ripped up, gagging him with the necktie and then rolling him aaginst the wall behind the door. Nipper yawned cavernously and kept watchful pop-eyes fastened on the whip.

"So! It is the brown cravat after all." Falaise stepped into the bedroom, and came back knotting the brown necktie about his collar. "A shave must wait, but I shall accept the loan of your razor, *m'sieu*. What was it this man said to you?"

"He had no chance to say it," muttered McHarg. Sweat was on his face; Martha had called for help, and there was no help. Peter Woods must be over there at her bungalow.

"You lie." Falaise picked up the whip. He lashed out with it suddenly, giving no warning. McHarg stifled a scream as the lash bit across his legs. The vicious in the unshaven features revealed the true nature of this man before him. "You lie! Tell me what he said—"

The whip poised for another blow. McHarg shrank, blinked, kept silent. Then Falaise checked himself, listening. He went to the door, peered out, and with a laugh flung the door wide.

"My children! Welcome, a thousand welcomes! Our party is now complete."

Martha Brundage came into the room, erect, angry, defiant. Her eyes struck at McHarg, and widened at sight of the blood on his face. She came over to him quickly, saying nothing, but putting her fingers to his cheek with a tender gesture of reassurance.

Peter Woods stood in the doorway, more debonair than ever now, fresh shaven and clad in garments of the dead Brundage. His hard, lined features were resolute and cruel, the darkly brilliant eyes flamed with sardonic fires.

"Complete, yes," he said in French. "But the charming lady, my friend, needs a bit of persuasion. This fellow—ah, you had trouble, eh? Very well. He is safe. And the dog; hello, my amiable eyes and jaws! *Ciel!* What eyes he has!"

He petted Nipper, who greeted him warmly. Then, coming erect, he thumbed his black mustache and fastened his gaze on Martha Brundage, smiling. McHarg, looking at the girl's wrist before his face, saw it was reddened and swollen; defiant as she was, he divined that Peter Woods had subdued her, that she was in terror of him. He wrenched at his bound arms, and desisted, helpless and futile. The dizziness passed, but the pain in his head remained. Do something! He must do do something! But he could do nothing, and realizing the fact, slumped down in his chair.

Falaise, however, turned upon his partner with an explosive outburst.

"You, I know you, Pierre! You have your eye on her. It is madness, you imbecile. We must get horses and food and get out of here, and reach the border. The frontier, it is not far. We cannot go crazy about a woman. Plenty of women in Saigon."

"Not like this one," said Peter Woods, complacently. "Why hurry?"

Martha Brundage trembled slightly. She could understand. Beneath this man's jaunty exterior lay the real brute, close to the surface.

"Name of a dog! I tell you, we must clear out at once!" snapped Falaise angrily. "You found liquor over there; I know the symptoms."

"The most admirable liquor in the world!" exclaimed Peter Woods, and twirled his mustache. "A lovely woman, tender and compassionate and amiable. However, Jacques, you're quite right. Get a sack of provisions from the store, and get two horses saddled, and we'll

get off. Or shall we make it three horses, *mademoiselle?*"

Martha Brundage whitened.

"You animal!" she said in a low voice.

Peter Woods chuckled and shrugged, and made a gesture to his companion. Falaise, with a grunt, walked out of the bungalow and slammed the door.

"And now we may speak English," said Peter Woods, and glanced at McHarg. "Why, my friend, you look at me with a positively murderous expression! You, *mademoiselle,* will be more charitable. There is nothing to fear. Do you remember one of your English authors put a French expression into one of his books? 'Courage, my friends! The devil is dead!' Now, that's a fine phrase. Forget the devil, my little one; he's dead. Enjoy yourself. Look at poor Peter Woods, condemned these many weeks to the solitude of the jungle. Would you not give him just one friendly kiss? These poor brown people do not know how to kiss, you know. But I do."

Laughing, he took a step toward the girl. She shrank a little, then drew herself up, still white with fear and anger.

"Enough of this!" she said, but McHarg could detect the quiver in her voice. "Take what you want and clear out. No more of your insults, you animal!"

The Frenchman laughed softly. Beneath his laughter, he was all aflame. To McHarg, things suddenly appeared in a new light; as with a glimpse of clear vision, he saw this man infinitely more dangerous than corded savage or the aggressive Brundage, a man more invulnerable, more deadly, than any reptile. And he saw Martha Brundage helpless despite her defiant air, helpless and quivering with fear, a woman who could go to pieces all in an instant. No longer mistress of all around her.

"Take what I want, eh?" Peter Woods repeated amusedly, his white teeth flashing. "Come! Thanks for the invitation, my dear. I'll do just that—"

He lunged, bronzed fingers clamping about her swollen wrist. A little cry of pain broke from her. McHarg plunged wildly at his bonds, cursing, but his efforts were futile.

The girl twisted about, slapped in a blow that drew blood to the lips of Peter Woods. Infuriated, he flung out his strength savagely and broke down her resistance. His arms clenched upon her, around her, drew her against him. Her cry was stifled by his lips, that left red marks upon her mouth and face.

With a spasmodic effort she broke his embrace, but slipped and fell. The man laughed, looking down at her with eyes aflame.

"What, my little one? Is it possible that—"

McHarg kicked out. A short kick, true, but the boot was heavy. The edge of the thick sole caught Peter Woods just under the ear, at the angle of the jaw. The man gave one convulsive twitch and then pitched forward on his face and lay quiet.

Nipper, who had been watching the scene with ears pricked up and a stare of curious interest, rose and ambled up close, sniffing at the face of the unconscious man, and then licked at his blood-drippling mouth. But Peter Woods did not respond.

"MARTHA! Martha! For God's sake wake up!"

Jerking his chair forward, McHarg stirred the girl with his foot. She came to one elbow, rose dizzily, and stood swaying. McHarg's voice drove into her with the impact of a blow, so edged and vibrant was it.

"Martha! That knife in the corner, on the floor—the knife! Cut me free, damn it—"

The knife of Hamed ben Yusuf lay there in the corner, unobserved. With a half hysterical gasp, the girl saw it and started for it. McHarg stared down at the still face of the man before him, the

strong, cruel, debonair features all quiet in repose. So in spite of everything this man of steel was vulnerable! Vulnerable, to one savage kick sent right!

She was coming back now with the knife, stumbling over the body of Peter Woods, recovering, sawing at the bonds with the deadly blade. It bit true and sharp. McHarg's hand came free. He caught the knife from her and next instant had freed his other hand. He was on his feet, eager, exultant.

From his pocket he dragged out the handcuffs, forgotten there from the previous night. He went to the recumbent man and brought the arms together, snapped home the bracelets.

"His pistol!" rose the girl's voice. "He has a pistol, under his coat!"

McHarg grunted. He groped for the pistol, turned the man half over, and drew forth the weapon. A pistol, yes, rusted and broken, empty, useless. McHarg threw it into the corner. He turned to Martha Brundage, saw her sway, and caught her. In his arms she relaxed for a moment, and then clung to him.

"My dear! And I'm so useless, so good for nothing, and you're hurt—"

"None of that, now. It's all right, it's all over," he said and smiled into her eyes. He kissed her, and stroked her hair. Her sobbing breaths quieted. He kissed her again, and her lips responded, and she smiled. A new light sprang in his eyes. "Martha! Do you mean it? That you—that anyone like you could care for me, when you called me a coward—"

"Don't!" she said softly. She got herself in hand, straightened up, smiled into his face and touched his forehead with her fingertips. "I never called you that. It wasn't so. You remember what this—this animal said? 'The devil is dead!' Well, that's true, in another sense. You've conquered—"

She checked herself, shivered a little, and her eyes dilated in startled alarm. The voice of Jacques Falaise came to them, from outside.

"Pierre! Pierre! Come on, imbecile. I have the horses, everything. We must get off!"

McHarg stared at her for an instant, a flush in his cheeks. Then he darted to the table and threw aside the blanket there. A sparkle of red went flashing across the floor, unnoticed. He caught up the pistol of Brundage and threw off the safety catch. The loads were intact. He grunted with satisfaction.

"If I have to do the police job, by God, I can!" he said. The voice of Falaise came to them again, urgent, insistent. Then came an oath, and the quick tread of the trim, wide-shouldered man on the verandah steps outside.

McHarg looked at the wide-eyed, startled girl. He smiled confidently, reassuringly, and nodded brightly.

"The devil is dead, my dear!" he said.

Then he went to the door and flung it open.

". . . the black stallion exploded"

BLACK LIGHTNING

by HENRY HERBERT KNIBBS

GIVEN other companionship than Bedrock, the old prospector, Young Hardesty might easily have become an outlaw. Orphaned when twelve, the lad had swept out saloons in an Arizona mining town, where his father had died of delirium tremens. Adopted by Bedrock, Young Hardesty learned something about mining. Kidnaped by a renegade apache and finally rescued by a small detachment of cavalry, the boy learned considerable about the Apache slant of mind. When some claim jumpers gave battle in an endeavor to secure Bedrock's mine, the Mebbyso, Young Hardesty did his share in eliminating the claim jumpers, was arrested, and learned a lot about small town politics and the law.

All these experiences served to harden his mind and toughen his muscles. At sixteen he was doing a man's work with pick and shovel. He know that Bedrock was his best friend. Yet laboriously grubbing a living from the rock didn't get a fellow anywhere. Now a cowpuncher could move around, go places and see things. So could a cavalryman, or a government scout. Even a pack master was practically his own boss. In spite of his fondness for old Bedrock, Young Hardesty decided to make a change.

One evening as Bedrock and he sat beside the supper fire, Young Hardesty ap-

proached the subject on a long diagonal. "Recollect the time that Apache buck tried to run a whizzer on me?"

Bedrock stared mildly at his young partner. "He pretty nigh made away with you, son. If those yellow legs (a popular name for the cavalry) hadn't come along, I reckon you 'd 'a' been crowbait."

"What I was getting at," stammered Young Hardesty, "the sergeant of that outfit said I'd make a good soldier when I got a little age on me. Them cavalrymen wear blue uniforms with yella stripes on their pants. And their guns and cartridges don't cost 'em nothin', like ours do. Or their horses or grub."

"That's right. The government pays for 'em. But we pay the government."

"Anyhow," argued Young Hardesty, cavalrymen get around and see things."

"So does a coyote. Just what's on your mind?"

Young Hardesty felt mean. But he looked Bedrock in the eye as he said, "I was thinking of going over to Fort Apache. What I mean, tomorrow morning."

Bedrock seemed quite unruffled. "You're only sixteen, which is a mite young for a cavalryman. Go ahead and try 'em, son. If you should change your mind, I'll be here when you get back."

"Thanks," said Young Hardesty, not knowing what else to say.

Early the following morning, mounted on his cow pony and with a generous supply of provisions in the saddle pockets, Young Hardesty rode up the hillside trail back of the mine. He glanced back. Out on the mine flat stood Bedrock, his bald head and his great white beard gleaming in the morning sun. He waved.

Young Hardesty swallowed a lump in his throat.

Arriving at the crest of the range, Young Hardesty grew more cheerful. He was a free bird. He had grub in the saddle bags, his old Sharp's rifle, a rope, slicker, a good horse, and five dollars in his pocket. He felt decidedly up and coming. He saw himself in blue pants with yellow stripes, polished boots and spurs—a frontier cavalryman, sudden death to marauding Indians. When he went to town and bellied up to the bar it sure would be hell among the yearlings.

Toward noon, while crossing one of the high meadows of the range, he came upon a small tent near the edge of the timber. Near the tent two horses grazed the length of their stake ropes. Apaches didn't use tents, nor did cowhands. There were no cattle or sheep up there.

In answer to Young Hardesty's halloo a stocky, black-haired man appeared. He had strange blue eyes, a thick moustache, a strong neck. He looked exceedingly solid. Young Hardesty curled a cigarette and offered the stranger the sack and papers.

The stocky man eyed Young Hardesty's rifle. "Deer?"

"Nope. Fort Apache."

The tent flap was tied back. Young Hardesty saw a tall, gaunt man stretched out on a blanket.

"My pardner," explained the stocky man. "He's hurt inside. Horse rolled on him."

The injured man tried to speak. He raised his head, writhed and vomited blood.

"I can't move him and I can't leave him," said the stocky man. "Puts me kind of up a tree."

Young Hardesty at once volunteered to fetch the Fort Apache surgeon back with him. This meant riding until midnight or later to reach the Fort. But he didn't mind that, or the return journey. It was simply a case of lending a hand when someone was badly in need of help.

IT was long past midnight when Young Hardesty reached Fort Apache. Routed out of bed, the surgeon told him he could not leave just then, as he had some

pretty sick cavalrymen on his hands. Young Hardesty was surprised that cavalrymen ever got down and out. He had visioned them as always up and coming, like himself. Finally he proffered his five dollars as a guarantee of good faith. The post surgeon smiled and shook his head.

Young Hardesty was made comfortable for the night. His horse was cared for. After breakfast an officer questioned him about the two men camped on the mesa. Some cavalry horses had been stolen. Young Hardesty assured the officer that the two horses he had seen near the lone tent did not bear the government brand.

He had made the long journey from the mine for the sole purpose of joining up with the cavalry. But what he saw of cavalry routine wasn't any too encouraging. When not chasing Indians cavalrymen were simply day laborers, cleaning out stalls, packing water, and doing considerable pick and shovel work. Young Hardesty's ambition to become a soldier cooled. He would think it over. Meanwhile the men on the mesa would be waiting, depending on him to fetch the doctor. The doctor couldn't come. There was nothing for it but to ride back and report his failure. Early that morning he set out on his return journey.

He was in the high country, riding along the rim of Dry Cañon, when he saw several horses grazing in the cañon bottom. They raised their heads, snorted and dashed down the cañon. As he followed along the rim above he saw that the horses had been stopped by a heavy fence. Dry Cañon boxed at its northern end. The horses were in a trap. Were the two men on the mesa above wild horse hunters or just plain horse thieves?

Farther along, the rim trail branched. Young Hardesty put his horse down the trail leading to the bottom. Here he again surveyed the fence at close quarters. It was made of heavy poles set close, and had a pole gateway. Beyond the fence two horses grazed quietly. A peculiar expression flitted across Young Hardesty's face. The two horses bore the government brand. They were far from home.

That evening, when Young Hardesty arrived at the tent on the mesa, he was told that the injured man was dead. "I reckon that settles it," said Young Hardesty. "The doctor couldn't come anyhow."

"Step down and eat," said the stocky man.

"I'm Joe Hardesty, Bedrock's pardner."

"My name is Purdy. My pardner was Steve Raingo."

Young Hardesty had often heard of Purdy and Steve Raingo, wild horse hunters. While some folks said they didn't always hunt wild horses, no one had openly stated they were horse thieves. Yet Young Hardesty could hardly believe that Purdy and Raingo would steal cavalry mounts when there were so many wild horses running the back country. He gestured toward the tent. "Is he in there?"

"No," Purdy nodded toward a low pile of rocks in a hollow between two trees. "I didn't have a shovel. Steve always said that if he got his, I was to roll some rocks over him and let it go at that."

"I heard he was a top hand bustin' broncs."

"Top hand. We was pardners for ten years. A little, ornery cayuse that wouldn't fetch over fifteen dollars busted him."

Young Hardesty gazed at the silent, black haired Purdy. Purdy was a tough hombre, all right. But Steve Raingo's death had hit him hard. More than that, hunting and breaking wild horses wasn't a one-man job. Sitting with his back against his saddle Young Hardesty drew his sawed-off Sharp's from the scabbard, pretending to examine it.

"Over at the Fort," he said, watching Purdy's eyes, "them yella legs was talkin' about a couple of horses they had lost."

"You're Old Man Bedrock's boy, ain't you?"

"I'm his pardner."

"Well, put up your gun. Those cavalry mounts strayed and got to running with the wild ones. They were in the last bunch Steve and me corralled. When it gets so tough I've got to lay my twine on cavalry mounts, I'll quit."

Young Hardesty slid the Sharp's back into the scabbard. "I was kind of thinking of joining up with the cavalry."

"What's the matter with the mine? Is it petering out?"

"Nope. But I was. It kind of gets a fella, pushing a wheel-barrow and swinging a pick all day. Anyhow, I was looking for a change."

In the silence of the shadowy uplands Purdy rose and walked over to the pile of rock in the timber. Tired and sleepy, Young Hardesty lay down by the fire, his head on his saddle. He could hear the murmur of a voice. Purdy was talking to his dead partner. Young Hardesty shivered. He had heard that wild horse hunters were queer.

LOW morning sunlight was slanting hazily through the timber when Young Hardesty awoke. Purdy was getting breakfast. Young Hardesty washed and came to the breakfast fire.

"I kind of give up my idea of joining the cavalry," he said, hoping that the wild horse hunter would make some suggestion. But Purdy merely nodded. "Dog's life."

"I bet hunting wild horses ain't no dog's life."

"There ain't much in it. But when you get going at it, it's kind of hard to take on anything else."

"Any of them horses in the cañon broke?"

"Six of 'em. Eight of 'em ain't even smelled a rope yet."

"You going to bust any of 'em today?"

"Mebby. But first I'm going to move camp down to the bottom. Ever fork a salty one?"

Young Hardesty wanted to say yes. But the wild horse hunter was looking him in the eye.

"No," said Young Hardesty. "But I'm sufferin' to try." He was disappointed that the wild horse hunter did not take him up. Even if he wasn't a regular bronc stomper, Young Hardesty thought he could make himself useful. One thing sure, he wasn't going back to the mine right away, even if he had to hunt up a job somewhere. "My pony ain't no regular pack horse," he declared, as Purdy began to take down the small tent. "But you can pack most anything on him, except a dead rattlesnake. I tried that once. My pony just went away and left me."

Purdy rolled the small supply of provisions in a tarp, folded the tent and roped the pack telling Young Hardesty to chouse along down, and he would follow with the ropes and rigs.

Young Hardesty anticipated an exciting day as he led his horse down the narrow cliff trail. Purdy would begin breaking horses. Eight of them hadn't even smelled a rope. Young Hardesty's enthusiasm cooled a bit. Raingo had been an old hand at the game, and he had got his.

Arrived at the cañon bottom, Young Hardesty took off the pack. He worked fast. He wanted to make a good impression, hoping that Purdy would say something about a partnership.

Winding in and out among the boulders of the cañon bottom came four cavalrymen, horses' heads nodding, carbine butts glinting in the morning sun. The sergeant hailed him. "See any government horses around here, kid?"

"No. Did you?"

The troopers rode up to the fence and let down the gate pole. Young Hardesty could hear the thunder of hoofs. Other cavalrymen were hazing Purdy's horses

down the cañon toward the open gateway.

"Hey!" cried Young Hardesty. "What are you fellas doing? Them are Jim Purdy's horses."

"Take it easy, kid," said the sergeant.

The wild horses were coming like a tornado. Evidently the cavalrymen meant to stampede them and turn them loose. Before Young Hardesty could replace the poles in the gateway the wild horses burst through and surged on down the cañon. The dust settled. A cavalryman rode up, leading the two government horses that had been in Purdy's bunch. That was all right. But turning Purdy's stock loose wasn't. Young Hardesty was mad clear through.

"Is Jim Purdy up on the mesa?" said the sergeant.

"No." Young Hardesty lied coolly. "He went to town to pack in some grub."

"Sure about that?"

"Just as sure as I am that you fellas done turned his stock loose, you yella-legged sons-of—"

The sergeant laughed, spoke to his men. They swung back up the cañon, leading the two government strays.

A few minutes later Purdy came down from the mesa, leading Raingo's horse laden with the extra saddle, ropes and odds and ends of camp equipment.

"Them dam' cavalry turned your stock loose," cried Young Hardesty. "I tried to stop 'em. But it was no use." He had anticipated an outburst of anger. But Purdy was cool, almost too cool for a man who had been robbed of several month's work. He stared at the open gateway, shrugged. "Well, pardner, what do we do next?"

Young Hardesty swelled with pride. Jim Purdy had called him pardner. Young Hardesty's voice was unnaturally deep. "Trail 'em and run 'em back into the trap."

"You ain't expectin' to spend Christmas to home, are you?"

Young Hardesty laughed. He had left Bedrock. He didn't have any home. A horse hunter's camp was good enough for him.

Purdy cached the tent and most of the provisions. He packed a couple of blankets and a supply of grub on Young Hardesty's bay.

"You can ride Steve's horse," he told the boy. "He knows the game."

No youth of his age was ever more proud. He was riding Steve Raingo's horse, and Purdy had called him pardner.

Down the cañon they trailed the fleeing band. By noon they determined that the horses had swung west toward Pleasant Valley, their old grazing ground. The partners swung round the base of the range and crossed a wide reach of semi-desert country. Here the wild horses had spread a little, nipping at the sparse bunch grass as they traveled. Purdy had hoped to head them back before they reached Pleasant Valley. Aware that this was now impossible, he headed for the water hole at the valley's northern end. Sooner or later the band would have to come to water. Young Hardesty took up a hole in his belt. He was empty clear to his boots. But he wouldn't have changed places with any cavalryman on earth, even a colonel.

Along about sundown the partners arrived at the waterhole in Pleasant Valley. Young Hardesty was gathering roots for the supper fire when he saw a bunch of horses coming up from the south. He dropped flat. Purdy, who had made no effort to conceal himself, walked over to where Young Hardesty lay. "What's the idea? Hurt yourself?"

"The horses!" whispered Young Hardesty.

"Coming to water. That's all right."

Young Hardesty got up, his face red. He felt that he had slipped a notch in Purdy's estimation. Naturally Purdy wanted the wild horses to see him, and shy away from the water hole. The game was to keep them away, force them to

keep moving. Then they would head back toward the nearest grass and water, the Dry Cañon country.

To cover his embarrassment Young Hardesty rustled firewood enough to last two or three days. After supper he sanded the skillet and scrubbed it until it shone.

About midnight the wild horse band made one more attempt to get to water. Young Hardesty whooped and did an original war dance. The band swerved and began to travel toward the east. Without a word Purdy saddled up and started after them. Young Hardesty stayed in camp. If Purdy had wanted him he would have said so.

Daylight showed an empty valley. Where was Purdy? Had the horses kept on toward the high country and Dry Cañon? Young Hardesty felt that the next move was up to him.

After a hasty breakfast he packed the camp stuff on his own horse and mounted Raingo's low-necked gray. As he rode he read sign. The wild horses had been traveling steadily east. Finally their tracks swung south, but still farther south were the tracks of a shod horse. Purdy had anticipated them, held them toward the mesas.

However, if the horses got into the timber, there were other springs they could reach. Purdy would need help. Young Hardesty pressed his mount to a swifter pace. Hour after hour he pounded on, his gaze fixed on the tracks of the wild horse band. Noon found him still at it, with no thought of stopping to eat. Close behind him came his bay pony, carrying the light pack.

ALTHOUGH still far from the timber country, the gray horse began to swing away from the tracks and head directly for the high mesas.

"This old soda biscuit knows a hell of a lot more about the game than I do," commented Young Hardesty. He gave the horse his head. At a low, easy lope Raingo's mount made for the timber.

Sunlight danced on the sparsely brushed country. As the land began to slope up, the gray settled to a steady walk. A cool shadow rose before them. The distant timber, like a low ridge of brush, seemed to grow and expand. Now Young Hardesty was riding within the shade of tall trees. With sharpened ears the gray stopped. Young Hardesty heard the crash of horses breaking through the brush. Hat pulled down, heels in the gray's ribs, he took after them. Seven or eight wild horses, rocketing out onto a wide mountain meadow, were making for the opposite timber. The original band had scattered. Where was Purdy? And where were the rest of the horses?

Young Hardesty left it to his mount. The old gray straightened out after the fleeing broomtails. The slant of sunlight through the trees changed. Now horse and rider were heading south, away from Dry Cañon and the trap. They pounded on, dodging moss-covered rock, jumping fallen trees, but always progressing at a steady lope. Young Hardesty hallooed. The sound rolled and re-echoed through the shadowy timber lands. But there came no answering halloo. A low branch whipped his face. Leaning forward, he surged on, broke from the timber and found himself out on a grassy slope which slanted toward the southern desert.

Strung out far ahead ran the few wild horses he had discovered. He tried to head them, turn them back toward the Dry Cañon country. But they were traveling too fast. Presently the old gray stopped of his own accord. East of the fleeing band another bunch of horses appeared. At their head ran a jet black stallion. The two bands were converging. Manes flickering, tails fanning in the breeze, the small band melted into the larger like water poured into water. Young Hardesty was puzzled. There

were now some twenty or thirty head in the band. Purdy was nowhere in sight.

Again it was up to Young Hardesty. Should he turn back and hunt up his partner, or continue the chase? Even if he were able to keep the broomtails from water, he knew he could neither hold nor handle them. But to quit with the wild horses in sight was not in Young Hardesty's book. He had set out to corral them. He would do it if it took him the rest of his life.

Again the old gray stopped. For the first time he seemed undecided. Young Hardesty jabbed him with his heels. The gray swung into a lope.

"I'm boss, from now on," said Young Hardesty. "I dunno where Purdy is, but you and me—we're up and coming."

Young Hardesty had his Sharp's rifle, ammunition, matches, and behind him came his bay pony, packing the small supply of grub and blankets. He was organized. But what about Purdy?

"Jim Purdy will just naturally trail me," thought Young Hardesty, answering his own question. Ahead of him a band of wild horses dusted down the wide empty desert. They were getting away from him. With a pack horse he would never be able to head them. All he could do was to follow and try to keep them away from water until Jim Purdy showed up.

"You're taking a vacation," he told his pack horse, as he stripped off the pack and cached it, covering it with rocks. Mounting the gray again, he turned the bay pony loose. But the bay pony didn't like to be left. For a long time he followed as Young Hardesty bored down the desert after the distant band. Finally the bay pony stopped, nickered, then swerved off to graze on the sparse bunch grass. Young Hardesty kept on. Beneath a small monument of rocks were the blankets and the remaining provisions. Jim Purdy would find them and understand.

The gray was gaining on the wild horses. Tossing manes and tails showed plainly above the brown wedge that moved across the afternoon desert. The old gray did not extend himself. He knew that if he should draw too near, the band would split up. And Young Hardesty knew that it was easier to trail and handle a big bunch of stock than a smaller one. The pace of the fleeing broomtails grew slower. The weaker animals were beginning to lag. Ahead, following the black stallion, the stronger horses had strung out. The wedge was becoming elongated, rugged. The wild horses had been without water for a considerable time.

IT was long past noon. Young Hardesty himself would have been glad for an excuse to stop and eat. He glanced back. In the far distance his bay pony grazed. Beyond the pony the timbered ranges dwindled to mere hills. His horse was now going at a walk. Presently the wild horses bunched and increased their speed. The old gray swung into a lope. Young Hardesty began to appreciate Steve Raingo's mount. He also realized that you didn't run down and capture wild horses in a burst of glory. You dogged them. Why, some old timers actually used to walk wild horses down. Went on foot and walked them down. That, Young Hardesty concluded, took guts.

Again the band ahead slowed. Young Hardesty shrugged. "If I only had a stallion along with me—what I mean, a stallion I could handle, I'd just turn him loose and there would be something doing." At the appearance of another stallion, the black leading the band would turn back and give battle to the intruder. That would have been well enough, had there been several horse hunters to run down and rope out the animals they fancied. As it was, Young Hardesty, alone, was getting actually nowhere. He was merely keeping the broomtails in sight.

With a farewell glance at the far hills behind him, he took up another hole in his belt and plugged on. The band was tiring. So was his own mount. It was now a case of walk, trot, lope a little, and drop back to a walk. Toward sunset the band, curving like a rope, swung toward the west. Young Hardesty did not know the country now, but he could see a distant ridge of hills beneath the low western sun. The wild horses were making for some desert water hole, else they would not have changed direction.

As the broomtails strung out across a wide, sandy flat edging the low jumble of broken rock at the base of the desert range, Young Hardesty pulled up his mount. To crowd the band now would mean a breakup and a scattering. Young Hardesty's own mount stood with lowered head, his flanks heaving. He was badly in need of water and rest. He was not a young horse—but what a spirit! Hour after hour he had followed the broomtails, almost of his own will.

"One more flutter and we'll call it a day." So Young Hardesty addressed the gray as the broomtails disappeared in a shadowy defile. True to his training, Raingo's mount forgot his weariness. Ears alert, up and coming, he struck across the flat, sniffed at the tracks that entered the defile and deliberately followed them. The defile widened to a bottle-shaped space of smooth sand studded with occasional volcanic rock. In a short while daylight would be gone. Young Hardesty wanted to hasten on, but wisely he let the old gray choose his own gait.

On either side rose abrupt walls of harsh, red rock. Lava streaked the sandy bottom. There was no grazing. Neither the gray nor the broomtails themselves could last long in that section. Some fifteen minutes later Young Hardesty arrived at a desert waterhole. The white-crusted earth was heavily tracked, yet there wasn't a horse in sight. The wild horses had watered and gone on through the defile, probably heading still farther south. As stout hearted as he was, Young Hardesty felt that the chase had been futile. He had worn down a good mount, cached most of his provisions far back in the desert, and accomplished nothing. Although tired, hungry and stiff from his long ride, he did not think of his own condition. If Purdy would only show up! But it wouldn't do to count on that.

The water was slick. Both horse and rider drank sparingly. Young Hardesty munched cold biscuits and bacon he had salvaged from the pack. He offered the gray a biscuit. The gray sniffed it, chewed it, rolling back his upper lip as if disgusted. But he did not refuse another. So Young Hardesty shared biscuit for biscuit with him. The gray was not interested in bacon.

"Well, pardner," said Young Hardesty, "what do we do next?"

The gray stood with forward ears, gazing past the water hole.

"Oh, I know they've done gone, just as well as you do." Young Hardesty grinned. Yet the gray continued to keep eyes and ears alert. The old soda biscuit was seeing things. But Young Hardesty reasoned that the gray was not that kind of a horse. He was all business. If, at the end of a hard day, Raingo's mount was still interested, it wouldn't be a bad idea to find out what interested him. Young Hardesty mounted. A few minutes later, as he rode up a tufa-strewn slope he saw what had awakened his mount's interest. The desert cañon had again narrowed to a passage not over five or six yards in width. Here the ground began to slope rapidly downward to a wide circular basin surrounded with high, red rock walls, straight up, unscalable. Crowded at the farther side of the basin stood the wild horses. Their heads came up as they saw him. The black stallion trumpeted his defiance.

"Knew we was after 'em," commented Young Hardesty, "so they kept crowd-

ing on, when they wanted to swing back. I got 'em—and I ain't got 'em. I wish to hell Jim Purdy was here."

But wishing wouldn't get him anywhere. Young Hardesty got busy. He gathered broken rock and built a wide wall across the narrows. The ground sloped rapidly down from the far side of the wall. No horse could jump it.

"Got 'em some more," he said to himself. "But what am I going to do with 'em?" Hunting wild horses was not a one-man job.

Dusk settled in the cañon. The band of wild horses had become a blur. The stars took shape, gleaming sharp-edged in a deep blue sky. Fearing that the gray might stray in search of grazing, Young Hardesty neck-roped him. Too tired to think, Purdy's new partner lay down and at once feel asleep.

About midnight he was roused by slow, distinct hoof beats. Without stopping to reason that Purdy could not have trailed him after dark, he decided that his partner was riding up the cañon. When the gray nickered softly, Young Hardesty was sure Purdy had arrived. But the starlight disclosed only the dim form of a riderless horse—Young Hardesty's own pony. The doggone old terrapin had followed him after all. He patted the bay pony as it came up and muzzled his shoulder.

Again Young Hardesty turned in. Side by side the two horses stood dozing in the starlight. If they could have reasoned, doubtless they would have agreed that human beings do unaccountable things.

Young Hardesty dreamed that Purdy's horse had slipped on the narrow cliff trail leading into Dry Cañon, that horse and rider lay among the rocks at the bottom, down and done for.

With the dawn Young Hardesty felt momentarily more cheerful. Stock had to graze and folks had to eat. Carefully he divided and shared the last of his biscuits with the old gray. The bay pony, who had grazed on his way to the cañon, got none. The sky promised a hot day. He couldn't keep the broomtails prisoned till they starved to death. And his own mounts would have to eat.

TO SIT still and wait was hard. Young Hardesty curled cigarette after cigarette as he sat on top of the rock barricade and gazed at the imprisoned broomtails. Young mares and shaky-legged colts, yearlings, old, barren mares milled helplessly about the rock-walled enclosure. Only the black stallion seemed up and coming. Yet he wasted no strength in futile milling, but stood as though carved from sleek black rock, his pointed ears toward the barricade, his full eye white-rimmed and blazing. His attitude was a challenge. To own such a mount! To catch him, break him, ride him! Or—Young Hardesty drew a deep breath—get busted. Steve Raingo, an old hand, got busted.

Young Hardesty was toying with an idea. If he could rope out the black stallion, throw him and saddle him, show Purdy that he had guts enough to tackle the job, why folks would begin to call him Joe Hardesty—not Young Hardesty, just as if he was a kid. Rope the black, and ride him. No. It wouldn't be just that, but a lot more—fight him to a finish. Then, maybe, ride him. Raingo's mount knew his business. He could put a fellow alongside the black so he could get a rope on him.

Taking down part of the barricade, Young Hardesty led the gray through, and replaced the loose rock.

"Pike's Peak or bust," he murmured as he mounted. How many of those yellow-legs at the Fort would tackle the job? Shucks! They had to have their mounts busted for them. Young Hardesty saw himself astride a streak of black lightning, spurring through space while all the world cheered and shouted, "Ride him, cowboy!" But Young Har-

desty's other self looked rather grim and full of serious business.

As the gray plodded deliberately across the sand of the rock-walled enclosure, heading directly for the band, the black stallion, instead of keeping to the far side of the milling mares and colts, laid his ears back and came straight for his enemy. Young Hardesty had not anticipated this. But, sensing battle, the old gray became exceedingly alert, stepping daintily, with a reach and spring new to his rider. Within seven or eight yards of the gray the black stallion stopped, his teeth bared and his head weaving like a snake's. Rope up and swinging, Young Hardesty dug his heels into the gray. The old horse leaped forward. The black stallion charged. Sidestepping like a weasel, the gray all but unseated Young Hardesty. His loop sailed out, struck the black stallion on the shoulder and slithered in the sand.

The gray was around and facing the black as the latter again came for him.

With no time to build another loop, Young Hardesty paid strict attention to keep in the saddle. So swift was the stallion's charge that the gray barely escaped as the black stallion reared and struck. Round the enclosure went the gray, the stallion after him. Young Hardesty managed to build another loop. His leg brushed the cañon wall as the gray dodged and ran at right angles to the black stallion's charge. Young Hardesty swung his loop. The black was again coming. This time Young Hardesty forced his mount straight for the stallion. The loop whistled. The stallion tried to dodge. But the noose looped his neck and drew taut.

Young Hardesty took a dally. The old gray set back. The black stallion went down, heels in the air and belly to the sky. He fell hard. The gray continued to set back on the rope. Suddenly the black stallion's legs went limp. Young Hardesty thought the fall had broken his neck.

The stallion lay on its side, its flank muscles twitching. Beyond, the wild horses milled and dashed hither and thither. The hot sun burned down into the sandy pit. Young Hardesty dropped from the gray and hogtied the helpless stallion. Slowly he loosened the rope on the stallion's neck. With his first breath the black stallion fought to get to his feet, thrashing the sand in spite of the rope burning his legs. Young Hardesty wiped the sweat from his face.

With an audience, pride in achievement would have keyed him up to any risk. But this was cold stuff. He was alone. Never had he tried to ride a wild one. Even had Jim Purdy been there . . . But Purdy was to-hell-and-gone over the ranges. Suppose the stallion pitched him, kicked his brains out or rolled him to death? He wondered if bronc stompers ever asked themselves these questions. If they did, nobody knew it. Could he, single-handed, even begin to get a saddle on the black stallion?

The black was down and hogtied. Suppose he did manage to saddle him, and then got pitched. The stallion would just naturally roll the saddle to a pulp, or rub it to shreds against the rock walls, or, crazy mad, jump the barrier and take off down the desert. Young Hardesty decided that he couldn't spend the rest of his life thinking of possibilities. Better do something.

"I'm going to ride that dam' stallion out of here, or walk." Young Hardesty gained assurance from the sound of his voice. He stripped the saddle from the gray. This meant there was nothing to hold back on the rope that had choked the stallion down.

But the black was hogtied and the rope was still on his neck. To work the cinch under him and screw the saddle down would be a tough job, but Young Hardesty had seen it done. If he only had a hooked stick to pull the ring through. But there was no brush in the cañon. He might shove the cinch under

the stallion with the muzzle of his Sharp's rifle. Even then the big job was to run the latigo through the ring and cinch down. Though tied, the stallion would fight with his feet.

But the harder the prospect the more determined Young Hardesty became. He laid the saddle on the sand and laboriously shoved the cinch under him as the black stallion weaved and tried to roll. When Young Hardesty slipped the long latigo through the ring the stallion struck backward with his forefeet. Knuckles skinned and a welt on his arm, Young Hardesty finally managed to pull the cinch up and make a tie.

Next he slipped the noose up the stallion's neck, took a turn round its nose, endeavoring to make a rough and ready hackamore. But the stallion shook the loop off. As the stallion raised its head and fought, Young Hardesty again looped its neck; bracing his foot against it, he choked the black down. When he saw that another few seconds would finish the stallion he eased up on the noose. This time Young Hardesty was able to fashion a hackamore before the all but unconscious animal came to.

Sweat poured down Young Hardesty's face. His chest heaved. A fellow could stop and rest once in a while when doing pick and shovel work at the mine. But this kind of a job didn't allow for any rest until it was finished.

When a bronc was down, you stood astride of him and came up with him—got your stirrups if you were lucky. But the black stallion was hogtied. He couldn't come up till the rope was loosed.

"This ain't going to be so good," muttered Young Hardesty, yet there was a glint in his dark eyes that said he wouldn't quit this side of complete disaster. To keep the neck rope tight so that the stallion couldn't roll was a job in itself. To reach down and untie his feet was lighting a short fuse to dynamite. Gritting his teeth, Young Hardesty reached down and lighted the fuse.

AS THE rope fell loose from his feet the black stallion exploded. Young Hardesty spiraled up like a feather in a gale. Somehow he was in the saddle, and that was about all. The stallion hit the sand, all four legs rigid. The jolt shook Young Hardesty loose from the saddle, but he got his seat again as the stallion went into the air. The loose stirrups battered the stallion's side, flew up and battered his rider.

Young Hardesty grabbed the horn, laid back on the hackamore rope. The black stallion reared—all but went over backward. That was a close one! With a squeal like a brake-shoe on a downgrade freight, the stallion lunged, his forelegs stiff, his heels to the sky. The horn took Young Hardesty in the stomach. He gasped. The world whirled round him. With his free hand he clung to the horn, clung with his legs to the stallion's heaving sides, caught his breath and went wild himself.

This wasn't a ride. It was a fight to the finish. He swung and kicked the stallion in the jaw as the black tried to crush him against the cañon wall. Swerving, the stallion tore across the sand, pitching at every jump. With a final lunge the black stallion stopped. Young Hardesty barely saved himself from catapulting over the black's head. Before his rider knew what was happening the stallion was down, trying to roll.

With all his strength Young Hardesty heaved on the hackamore. The effort was as nothing. Young Hardesty tried to jump clear. But the stallion went over. Young Hardesty felt as though a mine tunnel had caved in on him. The sun went out. Saddle empty, and dragging the rope, the stallion tore round the sandy basin, mares and colts leaping out of his way.

Half buried in the loose sand, Young Hardesty lay with his face to the sky. A trickle of red ran from the corner of his mouth. Young Hardesty was

down and out. But somewhere in space his spirit, astride of a streak of black lightning, spurred on and on, to the wonderment of a watching world.

About an hour later Jim Purdy, afoot, a small pack on his back, stood peering over the rock barricade. The day before, while running the broomtails in Dry Cañon his horse had gone over the cliff trail, and now lay at the bottom, its neck broken. Purdy had kicked loose from the stirrups, saving himself by a miracle. On foot he had trailed the wild horses into the southern desert, following the tracks of Raingo's mount and the bay pack-pony. He found the blankets and grub Young Hardesty had cached. When dusk settled Purdy had made camp. Up at dawn, he followed the tracks of the band to the defile in the Bad Lands.

The wild horse hunter was quick to spot the black stallion, now plunging to rid himself of the saddle. Near the middle of the circular basin he saw a blur on the sand. Shedding his pack, Purdy made for Young Hardesty.

Young Hardesty himself didn't like being man-handled. He didn't want to be disturbed. But something insistent kept feeling of his sore spots, poured water on his face. Presently he saw blue sky and a vague shape bending over him.

"Just what you been doin'?" said a voice.

Of course it was Jim Purdy. Who else would it be? Young Hardesty began to recall recent happenings. "Been riding that there black tumblebug. Just now I'm taking a rest."

"Reckon you got shook up some. Can you stand on your feet?"

It seemed that he could, until Purdy let go of him. When Young Hardesty promptly sat down. The cañon walls went round too fast. It was more comfortable watching them from a sitting posture.

Purdy helped him up and over to the rock barricade.

"You set there a spell," he said.

Taking the rope from his pack, Purdy strode out across the basin. The wild horses broke and ran in every direction. Somehow the black stallion had got his feet tangled in the dragging hackamore rope. In a kind of dream Young Hardesty saw Purdy walk up to the stallion, swing a loop and noose him.

The black stallion was now down and Purdy was working on him. Presently the stallion came up. Purdy was in the saddle. The stallion pitched, fought. Purdy raked him with the spurs, deliberately threw him and held him down. Came up with him again. Beat him over the head with the coiled rope. The harder the stallion fought the faster Purdy worked.

Young Hardesty forgot his sore ribs, his skinned hands and knees and the dull ache in his neck. This was no holiday cowhand showing off. Purdy was the real thing—a master workman doing a good job. Why he had chosen, at this time, to ride the stallion to a finish, Young Hardesty did not know. He was doing it, in spite of the black's terrific lunges, sunfishing and stiff-legged jumps.

At last Purdy threw the black, tied forelegs and hindlegs. Tied his head short to his forelegs and let him lie.

"He can think it over a spell," said the wild horse hunter as he came up to Young Hardesty. "Then I'll give him another whirl. Feel like eating?"

Young Hardesty didn't, but he wanted water. He wondered what Purdy intended to do next. Purdy rested and smoked. Briefly he told his partner how he happened to be afoot. The wild horse hunter seemed to be made of rawhide and steel. Nothing daunted or discouraged him. They would, he said, camp there that night. Next morning they would push the wild horse band toward the Dry Cañon country. Purdy figured they could make it. The band was pretty well starved down and would not be so hard to handle.

"Them mares with colts will need water," ventured Young Hardesty.

"But they don't get it till we hit the high country," said Purdy.

Young Hardesty felt better with a meal under his belt, but he was content to keep in the shade while Purdy gave the black stallion another whirl. This time the stallion fought as fiercely as at first. Finally Purdy let up on him. Young Hardesty wondered if Purdy could ever break the stallion, whether he would make a gelding of him and use him for his own mount. It was not easy to get Purdy to talk.

Wild horse hunting held no romance for Jim Purdy. It was business. With dawn, a band of weary mares and colts and gaunt yearlings drifted out of the cañon, held from water by Purdy, while Young Hardesty, bareback on his bay pony, hazed them on. They were leaderless. The black stallion, worn down, beaten half to death, neck roped short up to the gray, now dogged along, his eye sullen, his proud crest low. Purdy didn't seem to pay much attention to him.

Young Hardesty never forgot that ride. Sore from head to foot, half sick, and utterly weary, he stuck to it through sheer youthful pride. He could do nothing else. But often enough, through those long hours of hazing the wild horse band across the desert, he thought of Bedrock and the Mebbyso mine. One thing cheered him. He had given the black stallion a ride, even if he hadn't finished the job. Meanwhile there was nothing to do but dog on. The high country would look pretty good—grass and water, and a chance to stretch out and rest a spell.

TWO days later, the wild horses again coralled in Dry Cañon, Purdy and his partner sat at the breakfast fire. As usual, the wild horse hunter had little to say. Nothing seemed to interest him but his work. He seldom spoke of what he intended to do. But this morning Young Hardesty could see that his partner had something definite in mind. Rising, Purdy took up his old, worn saddle with its low fork and cantle, and nodded toward the pole fence across the cañon.

"Going to bust him?" Young Hardesty had been waiting for this. He knew that he himself couldn't do it, but he wanted to see Purdy make a good dog out of the black stallion.

Purdy made no reply, simply saddled the gray and rode into the trap. Young Hardesty was keen to lend a hand. He felt that the stallion was more or less his own property.

Purdy rode through the gateway. Young Hardesty shoved the heavy poles back in place. Disgruntled because he hadn't been invited to help, he stood gazing up the cañon, occasionally kicking the fence in impatience. He felt decidedly out of it. He forgot himself however, as he heard the rush of the imprisoned horses, the clatter of hoof on rock, the shrill neigh of some frightened colt. Down the cañon surged the band, the black stallion in the lead. The band would split at the fence and swing back up the cañon. As the frenzied animals neared the fence they swerved, some to the right, some to the left. But the black stallion, eye white-rimmed, held straight on. Behind him came Purdy, his rope up and swinging.

Without a pause the black stallion went into the air in a mighty effort to clear the fence and run free. Young Hardesty ducked and jumped aside. The stallion's front feet cleared the barrier, but his hind legs struck. He fell back kicking. When he came up Purdy's rope was on his neck.

Purdy jerked him down, dragged him. The stallion fought and struggled. Now Purdy's own mount was alongside the fence. Purdy took a turn of his rope round one of the huge gateway uprights. Another turn and a hitch and the stal-

lion was captive. But he fought on till he dropped.

Young Hardesty gritted his teeth. Purdy's face was white and his eyes had a strange, wild look. He seemed half human, half animal as he cinched the saddle on the black, deftly slipped the hackamore in place. He stood astride the fallen horse.

"Turn him loose," he said in a low tone.

Young Hardesty was only too willing. The stallion was choking to death.

The stallion's flanks heaved. His head came up. In a flash he was on his feet and fighting. Hot spurs seared him from shoulder to flank. He threw himself in a wild attempt to crush his rider. Coolly Purdy held him down, the hackamore cutting into his nose.

Little by little Purdy eased up. Again the black stallion was on his feet and plunging. That the cañon bottom was strewn with boulders didn't seem to matter to Purdy. The stallion went up and over backward. Lightly Purdy left the saddle, jumped to one side. The stallion rolled and came up again, Purdy astride him.

Young Hardesty had never seen anything like this. Plainly it was not a case of a man breaking a horse. It was one wild beast trying to conquer or kill another—the stallion battling in hot fury, his rider calculating every move in a cold rage. Young Hardesty's heart contracted. Purdy was beating the stallion over the head with the coiled rope, beating him over the eyes, blinding him. Tough as he was Young Hardesty couldn't stand that.

"Hey!" he cried shrilly, "you're killing him!"

With a last desperate attempt to rid himself of this torture, the black stallion crashed into the fence, went down. Young Hardesty expected to see Purdy mangled beneath those flailing hoofs. But Purdy had leaped clear. The black stallion lay where he had fallen.

Stripping off saddle and hackamore, Purdy neck-roped the stallion and tied his head short to the fence. The wild horse hunter's eyes still gleamed in a queer way.

"Let him lay," he said. "Tomorrow I'll give him another whirl. I'll bust him or kill him."

But the following morning Purdy said he was going over to Fort Apache, that he would be back in a day or two. Young Hardesty was surprised, so surprised that he asked Purdy why he was going.

"To lick the yella-legged sergeant that turned my stock loose," said Purdy simply. And that was all.

Young Hardesty visioned a gun fight. But Purdy took no gun with him.

Across from the camp, tied short to the fence-timber lay the black stallion. Purdy had said, "Let him lay." Young Hardesty had made no answer. Shortly after Purdy had disappeared in the brush at the top of the cañon trail, Young Hardesty lowered the bars and stepped into the trap. Swiftly he slipped the rope from the gatepost and loosened it.

Slowly the black stallion's head came up. His eyes were bruised, half closed. His shoulders and flanks were striped with red. As Young Hardesty gazed at him he almost hated the wild horse hunter. The stallion's gaunt sides heaved. He struggled up, stood with lowered head.

Young Hardesty slipped the noose from the captive's neck. The stallion stood as if bewildered.

"Get goin'," said Young Hardesty. "There's nothing to stop you."

Far up the cañon a horse nickered. The black stallion raised his head. The call of his kind had awakened him to himself again. Proudly his crest arched. With a neigh like the blast of a trumpet he whirled, sped through the gateway and down the winding water course.

"So long, Black Lightnin'!" cried Young Hardesty. The stallion always

would be outlaw, but that didn't mean he had to be killed because of it.

THREE days later Purdy returned, nodded to Young Hardesty, and staked the old gray out to grass. Silently the wild-horse hunter came over to the fire and poured himself a cup of coffee.

"Did you lick that sergeant?" queried Young Hardesty.

"Licked him plenty. Now I reckon we can go ahead and bust the rest of the broomtails."

"I been thinking," said Young Hardesty. "Wild horse hunting ain't just my game."

"That black stallion kind of chill you, mebby?"

"Not any," said Young Hardesty easily. And as easily he invented an excuse for the stallion's disappearance. "Yesterday I give him a whirl, myself. He pitched me and got loose. I reckon he's to hell and gone over the hill, by now."

"That's too bad," said Purdy. "I was figurin' to bust him good and give him to you."

"That's all right. I reckon I can lose him without bitin' my lip. Thanks just the same. If it's all right with you, I figure I'll pull my freight. I'd kind of like to see how Bedrock is making it."

Purdy nodded. "You'd 'a' made a good hand. You got plenty guts. Tell old Bedrock mebby I'll chouse down to the mine along about Christmas and fetch along a wild turkey. I'll be camping in the foothills before snow flies. And there's plenty turkey down there."

The wild-horse hunter rose and began to climb the cañon trail. He said nothing about where he was going.

That afternoon as Young Hardesty rode across the mountain meadow where he had first met Purdy, he saw the wild-horse hunter seated with his back against a pine, near the pile of rock that covered Steve Raingo. Young Hardesty waved, but Purdy, who seemed to be talking to himself, did not seem to see him.

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Aye, aye, Old Girl, I'm on the beach, the breaker's yard your fate,
But never wife was more to man than my old ship for mate.

We've sail'd the seas, we've seen the world's wide oceans' distant dawns,
You've shaken out your ensign to the Line's last heaving lawns,
While I shall die as landsmen die when I should die at sea—
Your mainyard backed, your colors low, the lifting sun a-lee.

I love you from your golden trucks to ancient sea-worn keel,
I know you have your lady whims and take a tender wheel;
Oh, aye, we've had our little spats; you sometimes made me swear,
But more than once I've sung for you when you refused to wear.

We've seen the savage Solomons rise up across the sky,
We've swung the Southern Cross astern to fetch the Dipper high;
You've breasted out through Sydney Heads with Hong Kong under bows
But no more hands aboard for crew than what the law allows.

We'll never more see China's shore, nor hear the seal herds bark,
We'll no more run our Easting down, ten fathoms by the mark;
No more we'll hear the breakers on the sands at Diamond Head,
Nor Scotland's hoot off Sandy Hook when running by the lead.

Where the ghostly ice cathedrals drift down the Labrador,
Where tongue of ocean hurricanes swing for the Cuban shore,
Where Hatt'ras shows her hungry teeth to gale-lash'd wind'ard craft
We flirted with disaster, while at death we often laugh'd.

We're done with Tonga Island reefs, Bligh's Entrance to the Bight,
We'll no more see von Luckner pass because he shows a light;
No nights when raiders seek for us to blast us from the seas—
Old Girl, Time's tide has turned for us and we must take our ease.

We've loitered down the gentle lanes where Leeward Islands laze,
We've seen the sperm whales romping in Alaskan silver haze,
We've seen the wondrous pictures that are painted by the Lord,
Tall ships and men and stars and storms that move by His accord.

I've had you hauled in Kowloon Yard—the job ten thousand *taels*,
New copper at your forefoot that last voyage out of Wales;
You earned the silver that I spent, you wore your rags with style,
I never asked a cable's length but what you gave a mile.

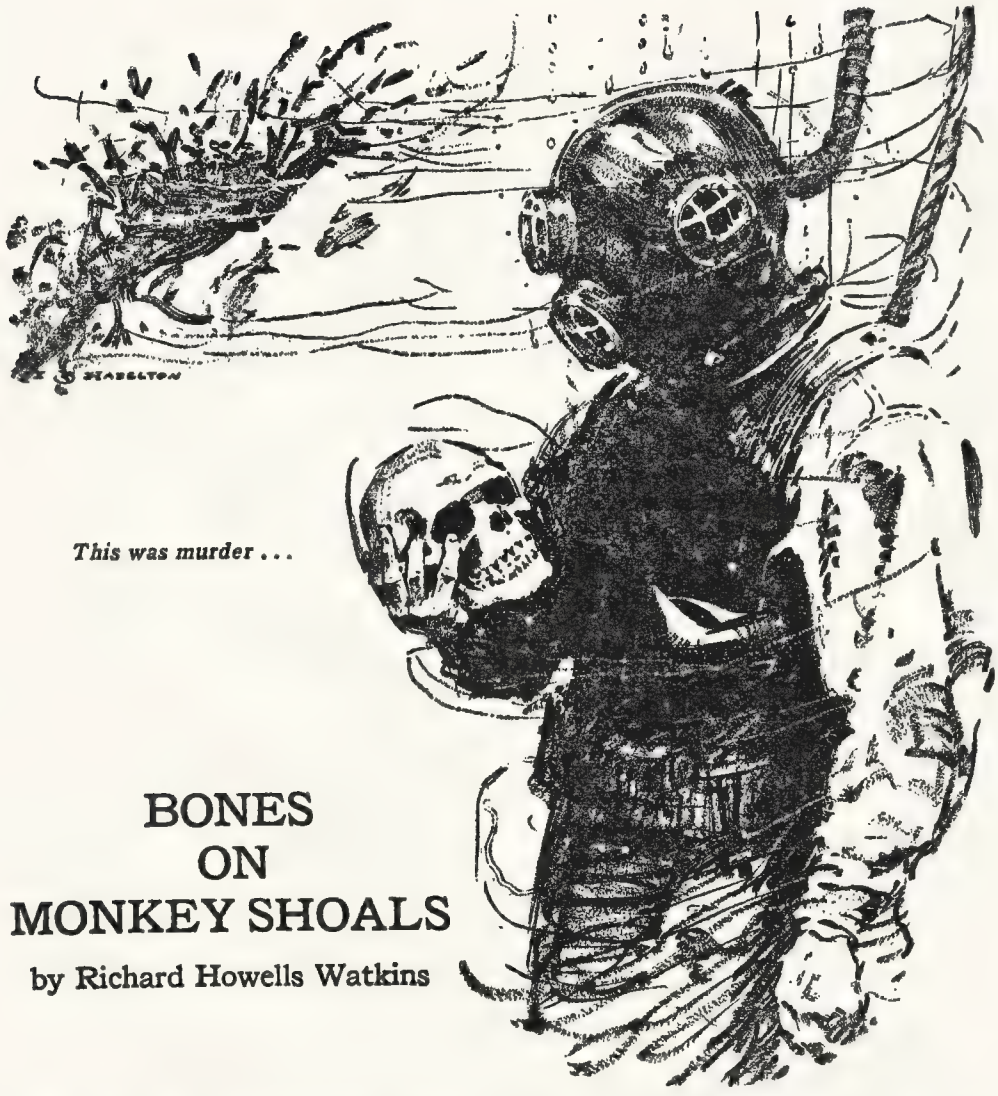
You mind the time you touch'd the mud in Yokohama Bay?
I wrung my heart to float you but you had to have your way;
You lifted to the morning flood, you shook your stern to Jap—
You sweet old witch, you beat 'em when they had us in a trap!

From Hakodate's temples to the roaring off the Horn,
Three thousand miles of track-chart where the gray typhoon is born;
Downpatrick Head for Celebes—with Irish bucko mate,
You shed a jib, you lost a spar, but never you were late.

We trick'd the low Aleutians, Great Circle to Canton,
We rotted in the blazing calms that sleep along Luzon,
Your bell to count the watches with contented tuneful chime—
But lose that final fatal fight with scythe of Father Time.

From the cloud on Table Mountain to Surabaya Strait,
From Java Head past Midway to the fog that's off the Gate,
Colombo toward Gibraltar, the Cornwall Coast, or Kent—
Old Girl, you never faltered—where I sent you, there you went!

I've coax'd you to the Channel Ports, the docks o' Lisbon Town—
You hung in stays off 'Frisco 'cause the pilot's eyes were brown—
Old *Tropic Maid*, we part at last, your bell no more to sound—
To you, fair winds and silken sails—we may meet Outward Bound.



This was murder . . .

BONES ON MONKEY SHOALS

by Richard Howells Watkins

CAPTAIN NICHOLAS REDRUTH, restless fugitive from the humdrum tramp ships, swung his lean body from the rotting stringpiece of the wharf to the varnished rail of his small schooner *Starlight*.

His schooner! Be damned to the scurrying, smirking and contriving by which men clung to their little places in the world. His schooner! And he had a job for her, a job with a hint of mystery to it, that would keep her looking like a lady for a bit longer. What more could a man want?

Unchallenged he moved forward for a look at the bow lines. Though the brilliant West Indian moon did not yet beam down on the bowl-like harbor of St. Thomas, he walked surely among the schooner's meticulous lines and gear on deck.

The crew hatch was open. No sound from below, not even a snore, indicated the presence of his foremast hands, two burly Virgin Islanders. Redruth frowned. He was no man to brook such an insult to his little ship as lateness on a sailing night. He dropped into the forecastle; the pipe berths held no occupants. He moved aft, past the state-

room and the galley into the main cabin.

One small electric light in the after corner dimly illumined its bunks and pivoted table. And on the floor, with a bottle of St. Croix rum beside him, sprawled the massive body of Starlight's mate, Bart Slocum. Ex-beachcomber, ex-master mariner, ex-jailbird, the huge man was completely out. His visored cap still clung to the back of his grizzled head.

Captain Redruth said nothing, but the nostrils of his narrow, commanding beak of a nose thinned ominously and blue lightning flickered in his eyes.

At the moment steps, precise, unhurried, sounded on deck. Down the companionway came the man who had chartered *Starlight* at this time when Nick Redruth badly needed money to keep the schooner his and in commission. Redruth snapped on another light.

Winthrop Ladd, a plump, genial man with a startingly smooth and creamy skin, paused at the foot of the steps, his way impeded by the mate's outstretched legs. A handsome man in his early thirties, Ladd seemed even more handsome as he arched his black eyebrows in expressive surprise at the sight of Slocum.

"Be with you in a minute," Nick Redruth said. He bent over Slocum, gripped him under the armpits and dragged the huge, inert bulk forward, into the master's stateroom. There he dropped the man on the floor.

He started back to the main cabin, frowned, stopped, bent over the mate and pulled off his visored cap. No long examination was needed. On the side of Slocum's head was a growing lump already the size of half a walnut.

Redruth nodded. "Slugged."

He attempted no ministrations. Slocum's head was thick enough and he reeked of rum. He went aft again.

WINTHROP LADD had cleared aside some of the suitcases and seabags on one of the bunks and now was occupied with a cigarette and silver lighter.

"I can help you handle her while Slocum is blotto," he said, with a brilliant, white-toothed smile that had sudden warmth and sympathy in it. "And so, for that matter, can my three fellows."

"They may have to bear a hand if we sail tonight," Redruth said crisply. "My two islanders haven't turned up."

"We *must* sail tonight," Ladd was emphatic; again there was that intimation of a driven man in his manner. "It is essential."

"Slocum was cracked on the head," *Starlight's* master stated abruptly. He tapped the side of his knife-edged nose and awaited the reaction of Winthrop Ladd.

Ladd was interested but not startled. "There's been a fellow prowling around the piers—a blob-nosed, slinky number with black curly hair, but apparently a white man. The mate may have surprised him trying to rifle this stuff."

He waved at his bags and boxes.

Redruth filled his pipe, slowly. He had had two glimpses of the skulking spy that Ladd described. On the second occasion, that same afternoon, he had seen the fellow on a street corner talking to an older, much more respectable looking man, a gentleman with gold-rimmed glasses and an air of dignity. Redruth nodded. His eyes bore steadily upon his charterer.

Winthrop Ladd underwent his inspection with perfect equanimity. He had poise, had Ladd, as well as looks and breeding. And he was well known in the easy-going clubs and hangouts of the Antilles, from the sandy islands off the Florida coast to the mountainous headlands of Venezuela. Air tour operator, cruise director, land speculator and organizer of "scientific" expeditions to amuse wealthy but bored yachting folk,

Ladd's various enterprises went well. A strange fish with money and connections. And Nick, by some people's reckoning, was a strange fish himself.

"Mr. Ladd," said Nick Redruth, with quiet politeness, "it's only fair to tell you that if anything queer, off-color or illegal is ever done on board this schooner I'm the man that will be doing it."

Ladd smiled.

"I can quite understand your unwillingness to put your fine schooner in jeopardy, Captain," he said. "But I assure you this is just a simple, honest salvage operation. I have my own reasons —good ones—for a certain amount of secrecy, but, as I have told you, our destination is Monkey Shoals, to southward of the island of St. Kitts, some hundred and fifty miles from here."

Captain Redruth shrugged his shoulders.

"I've three hundred in prospect and I need it badly," he said curtly. "*Starlight's* yours, Mr. Ladd, with a limit of fourteen days, if that's the story. If it isn't—" His stabbing eyes were full of bold challenge.

"That's all there is to it, Captain," Winthrop Ladd assured him. "An easy salvage job."

Redruth turned toward the companionway.

"Hands or no hands, we'll get out of here under motor as soon as Gurney and your other men come aboard," he said briskly. "I'll vouch that Bart Slocum will turn to by morning, anyhow."

HAVING several peculiar incidents on which to meditate, Nick Redruth perversely refused next morning to consider any of them.

"Three hundred dollars cash is my answer and to perdition with doubt!" he muttered. "If Ladd takes me for a fool that's his trouble, not mine."

With feet planted well apart on the slanting deck he stood in the cockpit and watched his little schooner go rushing along on her dubious mission over a tumbling, white-capped sea of the bluest water that lies under the sun—the Caribbean. The yacht's bottom was clean and freshly painted, a job just finished with Redruth's last dollars, and she was doing nine knots or close to it. That fresh northeast trade breeze on the little ship's beam would make a man forget he was a damned, suffering and mortal human being, Redruth reflected, cheerfully easing the jib sheet.

Having thus accounted for his inability to worry, Nick Redruth glanced around at the binnacle to see if she were on her southeasterly course. She was. For a diver, and a flat-faced, ugly looking yegg of a diver at that, the man at the wheel wasn't a bad helmsman.

That tough face above the spokes reminded Captain Redruth rather forcibly of the things he should be worrying about: his vanished crew, his slugged mate and a false ring to Winthrop Ladd.

If there wasn't something malignantly wrong with Winthrop Ladd and the quick salvage job then he, Nick Redruth, was no rebel against a boring life but a neurasthenic maiden aunt.

"Three hundred dollars!" he repeated. "Enough to keep *Starlight* in smart commission for a couple of months. I'll risk plenty for that. But if Ladd has a game in mind he'd better be good at it."

A couple of massive, hairy hands clamped themselves on the edges of the companionway just then and pulled into view the gigantic body of Bart Slocum. Bart wiped sweat from his broad, deceptively honest-looking face, now mottled rather than ruddy. He looked at Nick Redruth, to the luff of the mainsail, to the diver at the wheel and to windward, where the towering bulk of Saba lifted sharply from the sea, hiding its head in the trade clouds. As specific a location as a street name and number to Bart Slocum was that cone where

Dutch subjects live happily at the bottom of a sleeping crater.

"Jib halliard needs bowsing up, sir," Bart said quickly. He stepped over the coaming of the cockpit and moved forward. Nick Redruth followed him and stood by the cleat as the mate swayed on the halliard, which was already taut. Bart's eyes flicked at his silent master; Nick Redruth's face was quite as taut as the halliard.

"I wasn't drunk, Cap'n," Bart Slocum muttered with a cautious glance at the bare deck. "That's the funny part of it; ye might say. Rum's no more'n water to me. Look at this!"

Screened from the helmsman by the curve of the foresail, he lifted his visored cap momentarily to reveal the lump still bulging on the side of his head.

"In the line o' duty, sir," the mate insisted, replacing his cap gingerly. "A bit more an' my conk would ha' split."

"How did it happen?" Nick asked coolly.

"Well, sir, there's been a little zob with a nose like a revolver butt an' no chin dodgin' round the piers and alleys, watching our charterer—"

"I've seen him," Redruth interrupted, with a keen glance aft. This was the fellow Ladd had mentioned. "Make it fast, Bart."

"Well, last night after dark while you were away I caught this squirt down in the main cabin working on one o' Ladd's suitcases—the big leather one. The dirty little crook ran forrard, up the crew hatch and onto the pier before I could grab him."

Redruth nodded.

"With that I go below, thinkin' that if the leather case is what the zob's been workin' so hard for, it would be a smart thing to—"

Bart coughed and with some anxiety surveyed his commander's lean countenance.

"To steal the contents," Redruth finished crisply. "Damn you, Bart, I have warned you before that this is an honest ship!"

"Right, sir, and a good gag, too," the huge mate conceded humbly but with complete disbelief. "I knew it might not be smooth enough for you, sir."

He swabbed more sweat off his face against the pad made by his rolled shirt sleeves. Then he spoke, earnestly:

"Call me a liar, sir, but what I saw in that suitcase was a tin box with a tight fitting cover. And in that, wrapped in a bunch of white rags I saw a bone—the bone of a man's leg, sir, and then a skull and other bones with no meat on 'em."

"Get aft and relieve White at the wheel!" Redruth commanded sharply.

Bart Slocum hesitated, prepared to assert the truth of his words. Then he saw what Nick Redruth had seen, that Winthrop Ladd had come up from below.

"I clapped on the lid but while I was still bent over somebody clipped me," Bart said hastily. He jerked his hand in a sort of salute and moved obediently toward Davy White, the diver.

Nick Redruth stood still, tapping his thin beak with a slender finger and surveying the intricate pattern of shrouds and halliards at the head of the foremast.

Bart Slocum was, of course, a rascal. His very job as mate had sprung out of an ill-planned but hopeful attempt to steal this schooner. But Nick felt that Bart was loyal to *Starlight* and content to sail in her. He trusted Bart within limits. This yarn was hard to believe, and yet it was an odd tale to come out of a rum bottle.

WINTHROP LADD was swaying forward on the weather side of the deck, handling his tall, well-fed body with more than a mere landsman's skill in the quick motion of the yacht. Newly shaven, his creamy skin was aglow with health. He greeted Redruth with his bril-

liant smile, so full of warmth and good nature.

"Your theory about that prowler trying to ransack your luggage is correct," Redruth told him. "But apparently he didn't get far before my mate blundered on him and was attacked. Anything missing?"

"Not a thing!" Ladd assured him cheerfully. "And small loss if that dock rat had gotten away wth any stuff, unless he'd pinched some of Davy White's diving gear." He looked forward, at the blue, white-curled seas. "Are we getting along?"

Redruth nodded to a dark pile on the port bow.

"Statia, St. Kitts and Nevis are there all in a bunch," he replied. "How long the Britishers will hold us up at Basse Terre for formalities I can't say, but we ought to be clear and on Monkey Shoals a couple of hours before sunset, anyhow. Or we can lie the night in the Basse Terre Roads and start—"

"No; we'll get onto our job today," Ladd broke in. "I don't want to lose a minute."

Redruth assented and moved aft. Bart Slocum, granite-knuckled fists clamped on the wheel, stared questioningly at his master, but Redruth ignored him. He descended briskly into the main cabin.

From the port bunk Ted Gurney, Ladd's scrawny, narrow-jawed second in command, stared at Redruth with eyes deep-set in a face now rather greenish of hue. Davy White, the diver, turned from the galley further forward and Culp, the hairy-chested fourth passenger, now acting as cook, peered over White's shoulder from under bulging brows.

Redruth bent to lift a floorboard for a look into the bilge. The schooner was as tight as a drum; little more than a half inch of water gurgled in her bottom. He replaced the board, straightened up and glanced around the littered cabin with no pleasure in his eyes.

"You've enough equipment to raise a barge and enough baggage to sink her again," he remarked curtly. He placed a quick hand on the big leather case whose contents Bart Slocum had described with such awe. "What's in this bag?"

His gaze drilled Ted Gurney. The man's face grew greener than ever; there was no doubt of that. And Culp's eyes, normally bulging, stuck further from his head. Less perceptible was the uneasiness on Davy White's flat countenance. The tension of imminent action tightened the muggy air of the cabin.

"In there?" Gurney muttered. His lids came down to curtain his pinpoint eyes. "That's—some stuff of the boss's."

"Why don't you ask him?" Culp snarled, baring his teeth. From fear his mood had changed to open challenge in an instant; Gurney was more guardedly malignant.

"And what's in that?" Redruth pursued, pointing to a smaller bag.

The tension eased instantly.

"My things, Capt'n," said Curley softly. He turned his head to focus his narrow-lidded stare on Culp and Culp ducked out of sight into the galley.

"You should have chartered a liner," Redruth commented. He ascended the companionway with his face stiff as a mask to hide his thoughts. Bart Slocum had been indulging in no peculiar case of D.T.'s. A skull, the leg bone of a man, other bones—What did that mean? Redruth gave himself one guess and supplied the answer. Trouble. To whom or why he did not know. Just trouble.

Recourse to the authorities of the British presidency of St. Christopher and Nevis at Basse Terre he did not for a moment consider. Nicholas Redruth was master of the *Starlight;* he was responsible for keeping order upon her and he had a stiff-necked idea that he was capable of doing so. And there was the matter of that three hundred dollars, the mean little sum that meant all the difference between independence afloat and indigence ashore. Nick Redruth would

carry out his share of the compact and if Winthrop Ladd had other things in mind—

"Keep her as she is," he said to Bart Slocum, with a glance at the binnacle.

ALOFT on the foremast of *Starlight*, with his feet planted on the gaff of the foresail, Nick Redruth conned his schooner late that afternoon. Winthrop Ladd had opened up a bit. Redruth knew now that he was looking for a seaplane—Ladd's seaplane, sunk six months before on a passenger flight to Barbados.

On the very edge of soundings *Starlight* surged along on a southerly course with a bit of easting in it. From his station aloft Nick Redruth looked down into the transparent water. On his right the bank shelved off sharply into the turquoise blue of the sea. On his left the sea was green. Thus abruptly do the isles of the Caribbean, product of the partnership of mighty volcanoes and minute coral animals, emerge from the depths. To northward and to eastward the peaks of St. Kitts and Nevis towered into the trade clouds. They were a barrier to windward that quieted the sea.

Suddenly, ahead, Nick Redruth made out a yellow expanse almost on the outer edge of the green. Sand close to the top of the water.

"Port a hair," Redruth commanded. "Steady!"

The Shoals were given four fathoms least depth both on the chart and in the West Indies Pilot. But in that clear water the bottom looked within wading distance. Redruth hailed the deck:

"Round her up and take the mains'l off her!"

He glanced at the sun as the schooner turned into the wind and lost way with sails ashiver. In another hour the slanting light rays would make the sea as opaque as northern waters.

Under shortened canvas with the wind on the port quarter the schooner jogged more slowly along the edge of the Shoals. It was near the outer edge, according to Winthrop Ladd, that his seaplane, with pontoons smashed by a rough forced landing, had sunk.

For an instant Redruth took his eyes off the intricately beautiful coral masses, sea fans and sea plumes to survey the deck. Bart, at the wheel, was attending strictly to his job. Massed along the weather side, forward, were Ladd, the wizened Gurney, White, the hard, flat-faced diver, and the belligerent Culp. Whatever their business here they were all tense with excitement.

The job that would take days or weeks of weary dragging in deeper or dirtier water should be a shorter one on this small shoal spot, provided that no enterprising fisherman had already salvaged wings, cabin and motor. The sea forest was not dense. Nevertheless the half mile length of the shoal drifted past under Redruth's keen eyes without sight of sunken wreckage.

Under his command they took foresail, staysail and jib off her and started the motor. This time in a bosun's chair, he resumed his high perch and directed the schooner on a return course a couple of hundred feet further eastward, actually on the bank. They had gone no more than half the distance when his eyes suddenly discerned angles and straight lengths to which masses of grass were clinging. Coral's many shapes are rounded; angular things are products of man.

"Throttle down!" he shouted. "Port a bit—Hold her there! We're over something. White, drop that position buoy!"

The anchor, line and galvanized conical buoy splashed into the sea. A wreck was marked.

Rapidly Redruth descended to the deck.

"Want to send the diver down?" he asked briskly.

Ladd shook his head in immediate decision.

"No," he said. "I want to grapple for evidence that this is the seaplane."

Half an hour later, after some maneuvering, a grapnel they had dragged across the position came up with a bit of rotted, fine-woven fabric impaled on one of the flukes.

Winthrop Ladd needed only one glance at it.

"We're there, Captain," he said. "Quick work! Can we anchor right over this spot for the night? I'd like to make an early start on this job in the morning." Again, curiously enough, there was a driven, urgent note in his voice. And yet he had refused to send a diver down while there was still light!

Captain Redruth looked at the western sky and consulted the barometer, which, save for its diurnal rise, was steady as a rock. Settled weather. The bulk of St. Kitts and Nevis, to the north and the east, cut off the seas kept rolling on by the easterly trade wind.

"We can lie here, with one man standing anchor watch," he decided. "Bart, you'll take the deck from ten to midnight. That lumpy skull of yours needs a fair night's rest. Gurney, White and Culp will stand the other two hour watches until six o'clock. Mr. Ladd, we won't need you; I'll keep an eye on the weather and the watch during the night."

"That will be great," said Ladd instantly. "I think I'll sleep on deck.

He gripped Redruth's arm in his friendly fashion.

"Let me tell you now why I've had to make this a hush-hush cruise, Captain," he said. "The truth is that I've had a tip that some blasted surety company—the Island and International—has reason to suspect that there's a passenger's bag in that wreckage holding something like ninety thousand in cash and several hundred thousand in negotiable bonds stolen from a Havana bank. Of course I didn't kow I had wealth aboard when we cracked. But if we get that bag first they'll pay me a tidy sum for its recovery and glad to do it!"

He stopped for only a moment, with a darkening face.

"And, Captain Redruth," he added, "I'll also be able to clear my character of some ugly insinuations if I can lay my hands on that bag."

He hit the top of the house with an angry fist. "Some gossiping old goats in Havana have been muttering that Ted Gurney and I carried that bag ashore with us after the crack-up," he said through his white teeth and laughed bitterly. "Gurney and I were lucky—damned lucky—to get ashore with our lives. If that fishing boat from Nevis hadn't been near us the sharks would have—well, we two were picked up in time, but the fishermen know we weren't swimming around with any treasure bags in our teeth."

With sudden candor he leaned nearer.

"It's a long, unlikely chance that six months' immersion will have left much of the cabin of the seaplane or any bags in it," he said. "But if luck should be with us you'll share it. And I'd like you to take charge of any valuables recovered till we make port. I don't want to touch the dirty stuff; it's hurt me enough already."

"Right!" said Nick Redruth. "If that's what it's all about we'll have a fine hard look in the morning."

REDRUTH turned in early. Though he often slept on deck, this night he refused the blandishments of the gentle, odorous breeze off the wooded mounts and sugar cane fields of St. Kitts. He gave private orders to Bart Slocum to keep his eyes open to what went on in the schooner as well as around it. He also told his big mate to call him without noise at midnight. Just for a moment he considered his .38 automatic. Then he tossed it back into the locker in the stateroom. Pistols cannot be worn with

any hope of concealment under the light clothes of the tropics. Neither Ladd nor his men packed guns. He locked up his and turned in with the key in his pocket.

With a seaman's facility, he slept soundly until Bart's huge hand touched his shoulder.

"Quiet night, an' nobody stirring, sir," Bart reported in a flat whisper. Ladd's asleep in the cockpit; everybody else below."

"Right," said Redruth, sliding to his feet. "Turn out Gurney for his watch."

A couple of minutes later Gurney was up on deck. Redruth showed himself, had a look around, exchanged a few words with Ladd's unprepossessing follower and then went below. But he did not go back to his bunk.

He sat on the edge of an empty pipe berth in the forecastle with his pipe unlit between his teeth. His ears were alert for any sound from deck; his brain tugged and worried the mystery of Winthrop Ladd, his gruesome baggage and his concealed but strong desire to lie the night here over the sunken wreckage of his seaplane.

Nothing happened during Gurney's watch. At two the scrawny watchkeeper called Davy White, the diver. During this change Redruth watched alertly. The moon was rising, and he had need for caution, with the deck bathed in ghostly silver.

Again the murmur of voices came to Redruth's ears. Ladd was awake and talking softly to White. They stopped after only a few words. Of a sudden Redruth ducked and moved out of the oblong of pallid light cast below by the moon. Somebody was creeping forward. A moment later Redruth, secure from sight in the blackness, made out the loom of Ladd's thick figure. For a long minute Ladd crouched by the crew hatch, listening. Then he moved noiselessly aft.

Redruth thrust head and shoulders through the hatch, listening quite as intently as Ladd had done. He heard Gurney, who had been below, join Ladd and White. They were, all three of them, on the port side of the cockpit. Dismissing caution as more dangerous than boldness, Redruth slipped out on deck; shielded by furled sails and trunk cabin, he made his way aft on the starboard side as far as the mainmast. He had only a vague view of the three, but the light was good enough to tell him what they were doing.

While Davy White looked on, Ladd and Gurney opened a big suitcase. They lifted out of it a gleaming tin box. Their movements were tense and furtive. At once, with care to prevent a splash, the two men emptied the box into the sea. The box, with holes punctured in it, was set adrift in the current, to sink when it would.

Next instant Gurney went below with the empty suitcase.

Ladd exchanged half a dozen words with White and then lay in the cockpit. The diver lit his pipe and settled down on a cushion. The event was over.

Redruth retreated. Below once more, he tapped his lean nose severely. He did not go on deck again until White's watch was over. Then, quietly but without stealth, he took a turn aft, with his attention more on the path of the moon across the water than on the yawning Culp. With moon and stars for guides he needed no look at the compass to note how the ship was lying to her anchor.

Ladd was asleep, moving a little restlessly on the mattress he had brought up from one of the bunks.

"A man feigning sleep would have kept still," Nick Redruth told himself. He went below. Bart lifted his swollen, shaggy head out of his bunk.

"Those bones you saw are on the bottom," Redruth told him softly.

"What's it add up to?" the mate muttered sleepily.

"We need more numbers before we

start adding," Redruth replied and turned in.

WITH the coming of that mild and windless daybreak, Winthrop Ladd was up and again hot for action. He routed out Gurney and White and sent Culp below to cook breakfast for all hands. Then, while they worked, he shaved the smooth and creamy skin of his face with meticulous care. Redruth, quite as carefully, shaved below and put on a clean pair of duck trousers.

Rapidly White's diving gear, a rotary air pump driven by a gas motor not much larger than the yacht's battery charger, was rigged. Before the sun was two hours high White was climbing into his patched canvas and rubber suit. Culp, who acted as his tender, with much coaching from White, clumsily fitted the breastplate under the collar. Redruth, with an eye on the weather, watched all this with detachment.

"Take your time, White," Winthrop Ladd advised the diver as Culp lifted the helmet. "Get that money, if it is there."

Davy White nodded. Five minutes later, with motor barking and pump humming, he was swung over the side by block and tackle. Clutching the buoy line, he opened the escape valve on the side of his helmet and let himself sink through the clear water. The ripples on the sea and the stream of breaking bubbles distorted and made difficult the view of him from above.

Redruth watched the bubbles and the direction in which air hose and life line led. Davy White was taking a turn around the wreckage, going halfway around and back on each side, so as not to foul his lines in the tangle of broken wings and fuselage. But Nick Redruth made out, with eyes straining to the limit despite his air of casual interest, that White did not attempt to enter or even look into the cabin of the seaplane where, as Winthrop Ladd had said, the bag containing money and securities was located. Instead he moved away from the wreckage a few feet. Redruth glanced at the direction in which the ship was now lying to her anchor. White was walking toward the spot where the bones had been dropped over the side during the night.

A moment later Winthrop Ladd, leaning over the side close to Culp's elbow, gave a shout.

"He's found something!" Ladd cried, pointing to the jerking life line between Culp's fingers. "Look! Five jerks! He's signaling for a bucket! Lower it!"

Not too convincingly Ted Gurney joined in the indication of excitement. His black eyes gleamed at Redruth.

They lowered a bucket on a line. Tense seconds passed. Then White signaled to hoist it. Winthrop Ladd himself pulled it up. The bucket broke the surface. The men lining the rail of the schooner stared down in silence. In the big bucket lay the skull and several other bones of a man.

Redruth stood still, a statue of ironical attention.

Ladd set the bucket down on the deck of Starlight with a thump. He said nothing. He walked toward Redruth, with an expressionless face, and drew him further forward.

"White has found some of the bones of poor Illworth," he said. "Do you think we had better bring them to St. Kitts and report to the auhorities?"

"Who is Illworth?" Redruth inquired.

Ladd lifted his thick eyebrows.

"Didn't I tell you that part of it?" he asked. "Illworth was my mysterious passenger, the Havana embezzler, the man who brought the bag on board the seaplane. Surely I mentioned that he was killed in the crash?"

"You forgot that part of it," Nick Redruth said dryly.

He had stopped, in spite of Ladd's efforts to lead him into greater privacy

forward of the foremast. He looked aft, over Ladd's robust shoulder. A movement, small but somehow significant, had taken place there by the pump and motor where Gurney and Culp were crouching. Nick Redruth had divined rather than seen it.

For a moment Redruth's quick brain could not fathom just what had happened. Then he realized.

One of the two men had turned the pump so that its air intake was close to the exhaust port of the barking gasoline motor. The hair prickled on Redruth's head. His face hardened.

Redruth knew a good deal about diving jobs. The air that a diver gets through a machine-driven pump is hot and oily and tainted. It would be most unlikely that the man below would notice an occasional whiff of exhaust fumes until the deadly carbon monoxide they contained had made him drowsy and half conscious. And after that he would have no volition, no power to shut his exhaust valve, inflate his suit and rise to the surface. He would die surely and quickly. This was murder in the guise of convincing accident.

SIDESTEPPING Ladd, Redruth swung around for a rush aft.

Like some plump, soft looking men, Winthrop Ladd was very fast and his brain was as fast as his body. Further, he had been watching at that instant for Redruth to see something wrong. Having seen, Redruth could not live.

Hardly had Redruth's eyes and move betrayed him than Ladd flung his solid, powerful body at the master of *Starlight*. With muscles bunched, Ladd's shoulder hit Redruth at the knees, as a blocker in football takes out his man. He struck the slighter form too low for Redruth's long arms to grip him.

A warning yell to Bart Slocum burst from Redruth's lungs even as he toppled toward the side of the ship. A landsman must have fallen overboard. But Redruth was a seaman and his fingers were hooks. His left hand, sweeping the air, caught one of the fore shrouds.

As he lurched out over the side there drummed through Redruth's mind the thought that once he fell he would never again feel *Starlight's* planks under his feet. That thought, more than the thought of death itself, lent surging vigor to his body. *Starlight!*

Writhing, fighting the drag of gravity, he jerked himself against the shroud. His feet, in flexible, rope-soled sandals, clawed a grip on the low rail.

His head, twisted aft an instant, let his eyes flash over a dismaying sight—the plunge into the sea of Bart Slocum, taken unawares by Culp.

It was the merest glimpse. Redruth had disaster nearer at hand.

As Ladd began scrambling to his feet to finish the attack, Redruth bent and fastened the lean fingers of his free hand into the man's neck. Backbone straightening like a released spring, Redruth dragged Ladd off balance and then, in the same convulsive move, sent him floundering into the water.

Redruth started aft on the run. Slocum was churning in the sea alongside with the hairy-chested Culp snarling down at him.

Ted Gurney, black eyes malevolent, turned alertly forward. In the face of Redruth's charge toward the cockpit he slipped with the agility of a snake down the companion ladder to the cabin.

Redruth knew what that meant. A gun.

Culp leaped up on the cabin house to meet Redruth. With bowed arms dangling, hands half clenched and knees bent, he waited a chance for a grip on Redruth's lean body. His thick lips grinned in confidence. But Redruth's game was not wrestling with an ape. He darted in, feinting wildly with his left arm. His right was not so wild.

Even as he flung himself into the menacing circle of Culp's closing arms, his knotted fist exploded on the big Adam's apple that bulged in Culp's throat.

The hairy thug went limp. As he sagged Redruth straight-armed him. He toppled backward, hooked a heel into the cabin slide and crashed down the companionway onto the cabin floor, almost on Gurney. Redruth flung himself at the cabin slide, closed it and the cabin double doors jerked shut. The cabin roared and the wood of the slide crackled and opened up as a bullet from below drilled through. But Redruth, unhurt, jammed a steel marlinspike into the staple on the doors and leaped back as the door shook under the impact of another chunk of lead. Both penned—but for how long?

He heaved the diver's air plump clear of the hammering motor's exhaust and left that job to race forward toward the open crew hatch. It was well that he did. The tough mahogany was bored by bullets again and again as, bending sideways, he made fast the lashing that held it down at sea.

"Come aboard, Bart!" he roared at his floundering mate. A better aimed chunk of lead, snarling past his head, reminded him that the men below were tamed for only a moment. He jumped out on the bowsprit and with hearty good will kicked Winthrop Ladd's hands loose from the anchor chain.

At once the man swam clear of the schooner.

"I can wait!" Ladd taunted, treading water. "Gurney will shoot your cabin door to splinters. He'll put enough lead in you to keep you on the bottom. You meddling fool, if you'd kept quiet—"

Again Redruth ran aft. But Bart Slocum needed no help. Roaring threats, he had pulled himself aboard by the buoy line.

"Get going!" Redruth commanded. "Haul up White!"

REDRUTH lifted the main boom off the boom crutch, slacked the topping lift and let the heavy spar drop down against the cabin slide. Both men penned below were firing now, but they fired blindly and without plan.

From the water close alongside the boat Winthrop Ladd shouted out directions as to where to fire to get Redruth. Redruth kept moving fast. He gave Bart Slocum a hand at dragging White aboard. The diver was able to move.

"Get that helmet off him," Redruth commanded coolly. "And keep him out of my way."

He lifted the hatch in the cockpit floor covering the narrow compartment housing the yacht's small auxiliary motor and placed it as an additional shield against the companionway doors. The motor compartment could not be entered from below. With a big wrench from the tool kit, dealing mighty blows, he smashed the exhaust manifold.

"Blow off the doors!" Ladd shouted. "Shoot off the hinges—the staple. Keep shooting!"

Tiring of swimming against the unceasing drag of the current, he retreated again to the anchor chain.

Bart Slocum twisted off Davy White's helmet. The diver's unbeautiful face was as gray as a volcanic sand beach.

Redruth hailed Gurney and Culp. His voice reached them through the ventilating ducts connecting the motor compartment with the rest of the ship.

"In the cabin, there! I'm going to gas you faster than you gassed White. When you're ready to surrender stick your guns through the after port hole, starboard side. We'll be watching."

They answered with gunfire concentrated on the cabin's double doors. Redruth started the motor. The exhaust ports, barked like cannon, pouring out fire and blue smoke. Grimly Redruth flung an awning over the motor hatch to force the fumes back into the boat.

"Give 'em hell!" gasped Davy White.

Up forward, Winthrop Ladd hauled himself half up onto the bowsprit and lifted an appealing arm.

Promptly Redruth cut the motor and picked up the boom crutch.

"Stay where you are, Ladd!" he warned. "What d'you want?"

From the cabin the firing ceased.

"Captain, let's both be reasonable," Ladd called urgently. "You'll kill those poor fellows below!"

"Do you think that's news to me?" Redruth inquired dryly. His anxious eyes flicked at the splintered cabin doors.

"What're we waiting for?" growled Slocum.

"I've been unfair, Captain," Winthrop Ladd admitted with fine frankness. "I admit it. Now you can smoke up my men, but not before they've cut holes in your strakes. And they'll kill you. This is a stand-off. How about a deal? I've deceived you, I admit."

"Don't be too sure you've deceived me," Redruth retorted. "I know well now that you murdered this thief Illworth somewhere, stole his loot, got rid of his body and smashed up your seaplane here on Monkey Bank with a tale of his death in the crash to cover it all up."

Ladd's straight jaw sagged.

"That's right, by God!" cried Davy White. He clawed at Redruth's arm. "Ladd hires me to bring up this guy Illworth's bones out o' eight fathoms, in St. James Bay, St. Thomas an' then pretend to find 'em in this seaplane wreck. Just a gag to grab some coin off an insurance company, he tells me. An' when I do what he wants they try to kill me on the bottom, the bloody—They murdered that guy!"

Redruth assented grimly. The doors wouldn't stand much more lead. "This spy—the blunt-nosed prowler that was sneaking around at St. Thomas—he's a detective for that surety company, Mr. Ladd?" he said. "They got suspicious and started investigating, didn't they? And you thought to plant Illworth's bones in the seaplane wreckage where you said he'd died, asserting that you'd come here to try to find his bag of money. I was to witness the recovery of those bones for you. Is that what you want to be frank about, Mr. Ladd?"

Winthrop Ladd suddenly forced his smooth face into a brilliant smile.

"Yes," he said. "I want to tell you all that—and something more, Captain. That ninety thousand of Illsworth's is hardly touched. I've got it, and the bonds, in one of my bags, below."

He nodded vigorously. "Half of it will repay you for your trouble—and—ah—danger. Trying to silence the diver was a mistake, I agree. And I'm sorry I had to slug you, Mr. Slocum, but you seemed to me much too inquisitive when I saw you bending over that suitcase back in St. Thomas harbor."

Bart Slocum growled in his throat.

"Well, is it a deal?" Ladd asked with confidence. "We'll cut you in, too, White. All straight?"

For answer Nick Redruth's foot moved toward the motor starter button. But before he could reach it a crash of splintering wood came leaping to their ears from the companionway. An ax had knocked off the staple.

Through the shattered doors Culp's berserk face and hairy chest came thrusting into view. He had a pistol in one hand and a revolver in the other. His eyes blinked in the sudden blaze of the tropic sun as he swung his guns to shoot.

"Ah!" sighed the drenched Bart Slocum, almost prayerfully. His huge hands held the boom crutch. Before Culp could focus on a target Bart slung the timber, battering ram style, against his enemy's heavy jaw.

With never a shot Culp flattened out on the deck. Redruth, precise but swift, scooped the automatic from Culp's open-

ing fingers. He straightened up to confront Winthrop Ladd, charging aft.

"That will be all," Starlight's master cried. Ladd stumbled to a halt. His hands were in the air almost before Redruth could level the pistol.

"Do I go below an' haul out that other rat?" Bart Slocum demanded hopefully.

From the after porthole, starboard side, tumbled another revolver.

Ted Gurney's croaking voice called out to them. "Don't shoot! I'm coming up! It wasn't I that killed Illsworth—I can prove that, Captain!"

"Prove it ashore," said Nicholas Redruth, as Gurney's face and empty hands came out of the companionway. "You've raised Ned with my ship, you crawling slugs, but if that loot is below the surety company will gladly make that right."

"Even a twister has to spill the truth sometimes, Capt'n," Bart Slocum assured his master solemnly. "This might be the time. Buried treasure—but buried in us, hey? We'll collect! A hundred bucks a bullet hole! We'll get a spare mains'l out o' this, if they aren't lyin' like—"

He plunged below. A triumphant roar short seconds later announced that this time Bart Slocum had pried open the right bag.

TOUGH LITTLE STEAM SHOVEL

This member of the weasel family is noted for digging at extreme speed and for being a terrific antagonist when cornered. German dachshunds were bred to fight it and young dogs were trained on a badger which had all teeth, or even the lower jaw, removed. Badger fighting declined because of its brutality and the great havoc among the dogs. The American badger is much more carnivorous than the European species and weighs from fourteen to eighteen pounds.

LYNN BOGUE HUNT

"She'll blow in a minute," the Hood said.

SECOND PART
OF FIVE

THE COMANCHE KID

by E. B. MANN

BEGIN HERE

"HE WASN'T big—but he was dynamite."

That was Dallas Spain, who rode alone into gold-mad Comanche, trailing the man who was terrorizing the Shogun district—and who brandished his missing father's guns!

Spain was a name with bombshell qualities in the Southwest at that time. Angel Spain, the father of Dallas, had been a grinning, reckless gun-fighter who had killed his share of men. They had made him a peace officer, and he had spent ten years cleaning up the tough

border towns. Ten years of obscurity as a cattleman followed—and then a tragedy that shocked three states.

Two bodies had been found in an arroyo five miles from Angel's ranch. They had been identified as two men with whom Angel had been closing a deal for the sale of his land holdings. And now Angel Spain was missing with the money—and a hooded bandit, who carried Angel Spain's guns, was riding the owlhoot trail again!

Shortly after Dallas Spain had ridden into Comanche, the hooded bandit struck again, this time shooting Manning Doran, a rancher, and taking the payroll.

It was the enmity of Brick Zimmerman, another rancher, which brought to a climax the distrust of the town toward the son of Angel Spain.

That, and something more. For Dallas Spain accused Zimmerman of being in reality Jorgensen, who was supposed to have been murdered by Spain's father. The inference was plain. If Zimmerman *were* Jorgensen, then Angel Spain's body was found after the shooting at Spain's ranch—and another man, masquerading as the dead man and using his guns, had been the hooded bandit.

"Dad was a six-footer," Dallas Spain said. "So was Jorgensen. The body was that of a big hombre with a one-gun harness and a Colt gun in it. The gun was Jorgensen's, so the name they cut on the headboard was Jorgensen."

And then Dallas Spain showed an incredulous circle the bullet which was taken from the murdered man's body. It was a Colt—a type of gun Angel Spain had never used!

Who was the masked rider—the father of Dallas Spain, or an impostor, masking his crimes behind the name of a man he had killed?

CHAPTER VI

ROUND-UP

POE shooed us out of his office after that, claiming that he had other things to do than talk to us. But he stopped us at the door.

"Spain, how you bettin' on the slug Doc White is digging out of Doran? Colt, or Smith & Wesson?"

"Smith & Wesson," Spain said instantly.

Poe grunted. "In which case I'll have to hand Link Morgan's Colt back to him and apologize for suspectin' him."

Poe stood up then and came toward us, grinning a little sheepishly. He halted, facing Spain, and held out his hand.

"Don't you be sore at me, son," he said gently. "You come right down to it, we're both workin' toward the same result. I ain't got a lot o' what the books call tact, maybe, but I mean well. You just remember that."

Spain grinned.

"You ain't to blame for what you heard," he said. And they shook hands.

That handshake meant a lot to Poe. It meant considerable to me, too. Seeing how much it meant to Poe made me surer than I'd ever been that I was right in a decision I'd made a good while ago; a decision never to tell Poe how his own son had died.

It was past noon when Spain and I stepped out of Poe's office. There was a crowd around the livery stable, of course. Hank Johnson, who owned the stable, was telling all about the shooting and I wondered how he knew so much, since he hadn't been there when it happened. I heard afterward that Hank was in a crap game in the back room of a barber shop a couple of blocks down the street and hadn't even heard the shots, but from the way he was holding forth you'd have thought he was an eye witness at the very least.

He stopped talking when he saw Spain and me and came to meet us—figuring, I suppose, on getting some additional details. But Spain spoke first. He wanted a man, he said, to fetch his white gelding from in front of the Paystreak. He wanted the horse groomed and watered and fed, and he was specific about how it should be done. He'd be back later, he said, and if things weren't to suit him he'd find another barn.

It was just then that Hank's boy, Freck, let out a yell and came hell-bent around the corner of the barn. He was waving something over his head and it didn't take any second look for me to tell what it was. It was a piece of black cloth, like a sack with holes in it, and not a man in Comanche but what had heard that thing described often enough to recognize it as the black hood that had given our local bandit his name.

Hank Johnson grabbed his kid by the arm and shook him and started shooting questions at him, but it wasn't until Spain waved Johnson off and squatted down and made the boy look at him and started talking gentle to him that we got anything out of Freck that was intelligible.

Hank had left Freck in charge of the stable, it seemed, while Hank went down to get his hair cut. But Hank hadn't come back, and some boys had asked Freck to go with them to see a coyote pup someone had caught, and Freck had gone. It was only to be a minute, he said, but it turned out to be longer, and so Freck had missed the hold-up. If it hadn't been for the coyote pup he'd have been right there when it happened. You could tell that he was heart-broken about it. But finding the hood was the next best thing, maybe. He'd found it tucked down in an old tin can in a pile of junk beside the barn.

"I thought how I'd do if I was him," Freck said, meaning the bandit, "and he'd have to duck around the barn, wouldn't he, so's nobody'd see him? I did just that and I found his tracks."

Maybe they weren't the bandit's tracks, but they were tracks, anyway, and they might have been his. So Freck followed them, and he found where whoever had made the tracks had stopped beside the junk pile. He couldn't figure that out for a while; but finally he noticed a can that looked damp, like it had been turned over just lately, so he picked it up and there was the hood. He hadn't realized what it was at first, but he'd pulled it out to look at it and, when he saw the holes in it, he'd yelled.

Hank Johnson started edging away before the kid had finished talking, and I saw Spain watching him. When Freck got to the part about the can, Hank turned away. Spain called him back.

"Just where," he said, "do you think you're going?"

"To tell Poe," Hank said, and Spain nodded.

"Well, suppose you just let Freckles, here, tell Poe. He found the thing, didn't he?"

Spain nodded at him and grinned and Freck grinned back and gulped, and ran. I knew right then that if Dal Spain ever wanted a man killed, or needed a friend, all he'd have to do would be to call on Freck. And I was right. The way it turned out, that freckle-faced kid was a friend worth having, too.

THE gang around us fairly bristled with questions, knowing we'd been among the first on the scene of the hold-up and had been with Poe since, but Spain pushed through and I followed him. As soon as we had cleared the crowd Spain turned to me.

"And now," he said, "I'd like to meet this Swede Olsen."

So we went to the Paystreak. I knew Olsen, and I knew if he'd been drunk last night, as he'd told Poe he was, he'd be drinking gin this morning to clear his

head. He was, and there was a crowd around him. Swede was a jovial cuss and free with his money, besides having a Scandinavian twist to his speech that was amusing, and people liked him.

Spain walked up to the bar near where Olsen was standing and Lefty Sullivan grinned at him. "What'll it be?"

Spain said, "I'd like a lemonade."

He turned a little as he spoke and I saw his eyes catch Olsen's face. He'd spoken through a little pause, so Olsen heard him, all right. Swede turned to look at him.

Sullivan said, "You mean it, this time? Or is that your pet name for Bourbon?"

"I mean it," Spain said.

Swede Olsen laughed.

"By gar!" he said. "I don't know you, I t'ank, but you ban one smart faller. If I drink lemonade like you my head don't ache this mornin', eh? Lefty, you make one lemonade for me, too. I see maybe I like him better as gin."

Spain did not smile.

"My name is Spain," he said softly. "Dallas Spain."

"Dallas Spain, eh?" Olsen repeated it to make sure. He grinned. "Me, I'm Swede Olsen. We shake hands, eh?"

They shook hands solemnly. Lefty set the lemonades in front of them. Spain lifted his and looked at me. I shook my head. Lemonades weren't on my list, and I seldom drink liquor till after sundown, if at all. Spain glanced at Olsen and said, "Here's how." He drank. Olsen tasted his and his homely face puckered up. But he downed the drink. Spain tossed a dollar on the bar.

"Glad to've met you, Olsen," he said. And turned away.

Maybe the name Spain didn't mean anything to Olsen, but it meant plenty to some of the others there at the bar. We left a silence behind us you could have cut with a knife. Spain didn't seem to notice it. He walked back to a table in the rear of the room and sat down, and I took a chair facing him.

There was a deck of cards on the table and Spain reached for it.

"Canfield," he said. "I'll pay you fifty-two cents for the deck, you pay me a nickel for every card I turn up. Right?"

I nodded. It's a sucker's game, with all the odds against the player; but before I was done with it I was glad Spain hadn't been playing for dollars. He had the devil's own luck. I owed him better than three dollars in less than an hour.

He was halfway through the deck the first time before he said anything. But then he started shooting questions at me.

"How long has Zimmerman been here?" was the first one.

"Nine months or so," I said.

Spain nodded. He dealt himself a red ace, played the deuce, trey, four and five on it and grinned at me.

"There's two-bits you owe me," he said pleasantly. "What does he do for a living?"

"Zimmerman? Hell. Brick don't have to work. He owns the Glory Hole mine. It ain't a big mine, but it's rich. High-grade stuff, all of it. That's where it got its name. You know what a glory-hole is, don't you?"

Spain nodded. A glory-hole is the pot of gold every prospector dreams of finding; a fault in the bed of some ancient stream-bed where dust and nuggets, washed down from outcropping ore upstream, has collected maybe for centuries.

Spain played a dozen cards before he spoke again.

"Discovery, or purchase?" he asked.

I thought I saw what he was driving at, so I took a little time before I answered. "Brick bought the claim, I think. Soon after he hit town."

If I hadn't told him somebody else would.

Spain nodded again. "Know what he paid for it?"

"Twenty-odd thousand, I think. He got it cheap. Fellow that owned it first thought it was played out, they say. There was a bed of high-grade, and then six or eight feet of nothing, and then a bigger bed below. The first pocket was running thin when Zimmerman bought it. He kept digging, and struck it rich."

Spain was shuffling the cards for another Canfield layout now and I saw a flicker in his eyes.

"So Zimmerman had a wad of cash when he hit town, eh?" he said thoughtfully.

"Why not? Brick is a gambler, and a damned good one. And he knew he was coming to a gold-strike town. Why wouldn't he come heeled?"

"Why not?" Spain said. He was laying his cards down now, stacking them in neat piles, not hurrying. "Dad was asking fourteen thousand dollars for his ranch," he said slowly. "Twice that is twenty-eight thousand."

I laughed at him. "I paid twenty-odd thousand for this place," I said. "You aint suspectin' that *I* was spending that Jorgensen-Riley money, are you?"

"No," Spain said. "No, I ain't suspectin' that. Are Zimmerman and Olsen —friends?"

I frowned. "No more than you and Olsen are, I reckon. They've met, that's all. Hell, Spain! Seems like to me you've got a one-track mind. Why pick on Zimmerman? Maybe his alibi for this Doran shooting ain't perfect, but I can find you a couple of hundred other men in this town who can't prove where they were when those shots were fired, either. How could Zimmerman have known that Doran had that money on him, or even that he was in town?"

I stopped to watch Spain play a string of cards. If he got a black seven now he'd run out.

"Anyway," I said, "if I get what you're drivin' at, you think Brick is this hooded bandit, and that won't jell. How you goin' to get around the fact that Brick was playing poker here all last night, while The Hood was stickin' up that railway station in Lyman Junction?"

THE next card Spain turned was the seven of clubs. He grinned, pleased as a kid, and winked at me. But he didn't answer. I knew he had things up his sleeve, and it made me mad the way he could drag talk out of me without putting out anything in return.

"Another thing," I said. "You seemed right interested in learning that Zimmerman hit Comanche soon after that Jorgensen-Riley business. Well, plenty of other men hit Comanche about that time, too—lots of 'em with a damn sight more than twenty-odd thousand in their jeans. The gold-strike here was just less than a year ago, remember, and that's what brought most of the present population here. All of it, you might say; except George Poe, and me, and Manning Doran, and a few of the cattlemen."

Spain nodded. "And Olsen?"

"Olsen's been here longer than that. But—" I couldn't resist baiting him a little. "Olsen runs a one-man spread—at least it's been a one-man spread up to now—and it's away back in the hills, away from everybody. Olsen could slip off for a week or two and nobody'd ever miss him, likely . . . To pose as Jorgensen, I mean."

Spain took it all in seeming seriousness.

"Thanks," he said. "I'll sure remember that."

But I knew that down underneath his seeming seriousness, he was laughing at me.

I said, "Oh, go to hell! You ain't interested in Olsen, and I know it. But you've got just as much reason for suspectin' Olsen as you've got for suspectin' Zimmerman, at that. Why don't you admit it?"

"My, my!" Spain said. "You're sure

a loyal friend of Zimmerman's, ain't you, Mac? Defendin' him and all—"

I shut up then. I knew he knew I didn't like Brick Zimmerman, and that I wasn't necessarily defending him. But I was burning up with curiosity and Spain knew it and didn't intend to give me any salve for it. He'd milked me dry, or nearly so, and hadn't told me anything. It made me sore, and yet I couldn't help admiring him.

And he had called me Mac.

He was a younger man than I was, and all that; but having him call me Mac pleased me. I was pretty sure he wouldn't have done it unless he liked me, and I wanted him to like me.

Poe came in then. He spoke to some of the boys at the bar, and then came on back to us. He scowled at Spain.

"Doc got the slug," he said.

Spain looked up, waiting.

"You lose," Poe said. This slug came out of a Colt gun. It's got the narrow grooves slantin' from right to left, just like you showed me. It's hardly battered up at all. There's no mistakin' it."

Spain whistled softly.

"So you're arresting Morgan," he said slowly.

Poe shook his head. "That's what I ought to do, maybe. But I ain't doin' it. Not now, at least. You see, Doc says there's a chance that Manning may pull out of this. At least enough to do some talkin'. I'd feel like a fool, wouldn't I, if I arrested Link and then Manning came to and told me something that proved Link didn't do it? That's partly why I came to see you two. Link don't know that I suspect him, and neither does anybody else know it but you. I don't want him to know."

He paused and looked half-angrily at Spain.

"I don't know why I opened up like I did, anyway, and you a stranger," he said.

Spain grinned.

"I've got an honest face," he said. "It's all right, Poe. I won't do any talking."

Joe grunted. "Play your red jack on the black queen. Sorry! It makes me sore as hell to have anybody tell me how to play solitaire, and here I am doin' it! Just what d'you suppose made Zimmerman take such a sudden and violent dislike to you? Or do you know?"

"Maybe," Spain said slowly, "it was because he heard me order lemonade."

He said it jokingly, yet something clicked inside my brain. He'd ordered lemonade, too, when he shouldered up to the bar beside Swede Olsen. Yet he wasn't a teetotaler. He'd drunk Bourbon, I remembered, after his fight with Zimmerman.

It meant something; I was sure of that. But what?

Spain simply played the red jack on the black queen and said nothing. Poe shot a sidelong glance at him and frowned, but he didn't ask any questions. Neither did I. It didn't get you anywhere to question Spain. I'd found that out.

CHAPTER VII

ARMED TRUCE

IT was three days after that before Manning Doran came out of the deathly stupor of his wound sufficiently to talk to us, and it was during those three days that I had my first glimpses of Dallas Spain's unorthodox efficiency with cards. It was a mental efficiency, not a manual one; and I can swear to that because I've seen the best card-sharks the Southwest ever knew and a man can't stack a deck without my knowing it. Yet men who were adept at both the mental and the manual skill lost chips to Spain. It fairly fascinated me to watch him play.

Seeing him box was something, too. Every afternoon, he and Lefty and Tom Olliphant went out behind the Pay-

streak for a session with the gloves, and Spain was so good that Lefty's eyes would be shining with pride in him before they'd finished. Spain didn't have much science at first, but he was quick to learn. Lefty never had to tell him a thing more than once. Sometimes he didn't have to tell him at all. Spain would make a mistake and Lefty would shoot in a punch and Spain would grin, and next time the opening wouldn't be there.

And what he lacked in science he made up for in speed. He was a streak with his hands, and fast on his feet. A lot of the things most men have to learn seemed just to come naturally to Spain. How to hit, for one thing. It's a knack, and one some men can't learn; but Spain had it. He could duck a punch, or roll with one; and just when you thought he was busy covering up he'd shoot one hand—either hand, it didn't matter much—and it would hurt.

It was surprising, too, how the new game caught on. A lot of the boys came to watch and stayed to go a round or two themselves, and every day the crowd was bigger and noisier. Lefty ordered six new sets of gloves from somewhere—fighting gloves, not pillow-cushions like the ones they'd been using. Olliphant paid for them.

But there were stranger things afoot in Comanche during those days than Spain's skill with cards or with the boxing gloves. The most amazing thing of all was Zimmerman.

Knowing Zimmerman, I'd have said that no man could handle him as Spain had done without having to meet him sooner or later, and probably sooner, with guns. I'd have expected that blow of Spain's to rankle and fester in Zimmerman's mind until nothing but a killing, his own or the other man's, could cure it. But I was wrong. Brick almost fawned on Spain. The Monday following the Doran shooting Zimmerman caught Spain before a crowd of men in the Paystreak and made a bluff apology for the mistake that had caused their little skirmish and said he was glad Spain had been man enough and quick enough to end it short of a killing, and couldn't they be friends?

Spain's answer, too, was worth recording. He didn't seem to see Brick's tentative gesture toward offering his hand, but he smiled a slow smile and shrugged and ordered drinks.

"I'm a little slow," he said, "about choosing my friends. It's a peculiarity of mine. Let's know each other better before we say we're friends, eh, Zimmerman? But that don't mean we've got to go on circling each other like a couple of quarrelsome pups each time we meet. Okay?"

"Okay by me," Brick said, and drank.

So that was that. When it was over, Zimmerman and Spain sat into a poker game together and the town breathed easier. Zimmerman lost better than three hundred dollars in that game, but not even that upset his good humor. He mourned a good deal, noisily, because that was his nature; but there was no real rancor in his complaints.

Thinking it over later, though, I saw that Spain hadn't committed himself in what he'd said to Zimmerman. He hadn't taken Brick's hand, hadn't promised anything. I guessed then that that was a deliberate reticence on Spain's part. Spain was too honest to profess a friendliness he didn't feel. He still distrusted Brick and had refused to bind himself to any truce.

It wasn't until Wednesday that I found out that Spain had been making twice-daily calls on Manning Doran.

"Just droppin' by," Doc White said, "to ask if there's anything he could do, and the like. Nice kid, that Spain."

White chuckled then and winked at me. "Reckon maybe it's in the back of his mind that he'll sooner or later run into Paula there—which ain't to his discredit. So far, though, he's failed.

Paula's been there, all right, but she's seen him comin' and ducked. Reg'lar little spitfire, that girl. Got her hackles up at Spain right at the start and ain't meanin' to change her mind about him whatever. It's too bad, too. Spain or Morgan—either of 'em's a better bet than Zimmerman, to my notion."

And to mine. But there'd have been no use telling Paula that. She was as like her father as she could be, with all of Manning's fineness and loyalty, and with all his stubbornness.

So when George Poe told me, about noon on Wednesday, that Manning had come out of his long sleep during the night and that Doc White had said that by afternoon we could see him and talk to him, I stopped at the Brill House on my way up to Doc's hospital with the idea of taking Spain along with us. I figured he had a personal interest in what Manning might say, and since he'd been decent enough to call as he had, he'd earned the right to listen in. Poe didn't exactly approve of the idea, but he came into the hotel lobby with me anyway and I asked for Spain.

"He's out," the clerk said. "Left shortly after sun-up and ain't been back since." And, like anybody in any small town anywhere, he added a bit of gratuitous information. "He's always out in the mornings. Leaves early and don't show up again till after noon. Hank Johnson, down at the livery barn, tells me he takes that white nag o' his and goes somewhere; Hank don't know where."

I REALIZED, now that I came to think of it, that I hadn't seen Spain any morning since Sunday. I hadn't noticed it before, because I'm pretty apt to sleep late myself and I just supposed, if I thought of it at all, that Spain did the same. Playing poker late every night the way he did, it would have been no more than natural. But now that I knew that he didn't sleep late, that he was out bright and early each morning, riding off nobody knew where on business of his own, it set me to thinking and worrying.

But I didn't say anything about that to Poe. We walked together up the hill to the hospital and Doc White met us at the door. Doc was trying hard to look stern and bossy, but it was hard for him to keep from showing how pleased and proud he was. He'd done a good job keeping Manning Doran alive at all, and he knew it and was proud of it.

"You can talk to him," Doc said gruffly. "He's goin' to get well, barrin' accident. But, if I see you're excitin' him or tirin' him, out you go. I don't want you jaspers spoilin' all the work I've done on him."

It was good to see Manning's face light up at sight of us, and feeling his fingers tighten over mine did something to my throat. It was something I hadn't expected ever to do again, shaking hands with Manning, and it was fine. I guess Poe felt the same way about it, because his voice was pretty husky.

"Well, Manning. It's about time! Hell of a note, an able-bodied man like you layin' abed like this! How you feelin'?"

"Fine, George. Seems sort o' like I'd been—away. It's good to be back. Hi, Mac. You boys sit down."

Poe must have figured that Doc wouldn't let us stay there very long, because he didn't lose any time.

"Who shot you, Manning?" he asked crisply.

Doran looked at him.

"I don't know, George," he said slowly. "It was The Hood, but that ain't what you mean, is it? I already told you that."

Poe shook his head.

"I mean who was it?" he said. "Wasn't there something about him—his voice, the way he was dressed, the color of his

hair—that'd give you a clue to who he was?"

Doran closed his eyes and didn't say anything for a moment and I knew he was going back into that flash of time before the shot hit him. He shook his head.

"Sorry. Nothing. He was a big jasper. Dressed—I don't remember how he was dressed, Poe. Nothin' unusual, or I'd have noticed it, I reckon. I only had a glimpse of him, you know. The hood covered his head. His voice—I've heard that voice, all right. It was low and hoarse, like he was tryin' to disguise it; but there was somethin' about it— All the time I've been lyin' here, it seems like, I've been trying to figure out whose voice that was. I know I ought to, but I can't. It worries me."

Poe leaned forward. "Could it have been Link Morgan, Manning? He could've slipped up behind you—"

Doran's eyes clouded up with pain. "I know. Don't think I haven't thought of that. But I don't think so, Poe. Link was back there in the stall, unsaddling, when I turned to watch Bob Harvey walk over toward the bank. Link didn't have any hood on then; I could see his head over the top of the stall partition. It wasn't long after that before this jasper spoke to me. I don't think Link could've got from the stall to where this hombre was in the time he had, George. I don't think he could do it."

Doran's eyes closed again and I saw his lips tighten. "It hurts like hell, George, even to figure Link as a possibility. I trusted that boy—" His eyes opened again and he met Poe's gaze defiantly. "Damn it, he didn't do it, Poe. Lay off of him."

Poe shrugged. He wasn't satisfied: I knew that, and Doran knew it. But he dropped the subject. "A feller that claims to've had a glimpse of this jasper tells me he was wearin' a checkered shirt. That right?"

Nobody's had any glimpse of the bandit, so far as I knew, and nobody'd claimed they had. I knew that Link Morgan's shirt, that day, had been a checkered one and it wasn't hard to see what Poe was trying to do. But Doran shook his head wearily.

"I don't know, George. Seems like to me his shirt was gray. I can't be sure."

Poe hadn't finished yet, but I knew all I had to know, which was that Doran couldn't identify the man who had shot him. So I got up and walked over to the window and stopped listening to Poe's questions.

I WAS standing there when Paula came around the corner of the Brill House and started up the hill toward me, walking with that crisp step of hers, straight and slim and high-headed as a Derby-winner. I could tell from the look of her eyes that she'd had the first real sleep this morning she'd had since her father was hurt.

She came to where the path turned in from the street and paused to pick a bright new bud the size of a dollar off a sunflower stalk growing there. And then's when Spain came around the corner of the house and swung down out of the saddle and dropped the white gelding's reins and stood squarely in the path, awaiting her.

Whether it was planned or not, it was well timed. There was no way for Paula to avoid him without turning in obvious flight, and she wouldn't do that for any man. I knew that, and maybe Spain knew it too. He stood there, smiling, and let her come to him.

The window was open a little, so I heard every word of it. Paula came up

to within six feet of Spain and Spain didn't move and she had no choice. She stopped.

"If you don't mind," she said, "I'd like to pass."

I saw her flush and I could see that it was hard for her to speak so primly with Spain standing there so motionless in front of her.

"One time," Spain said, "when my dad was sick, a man brought him a spotted pup. That pup wiggled out of the man's arms and landed square in the middle of my dad's sickest place and jumped up and down on it and licked dad's face and acted such a friendly fool generally that dad had to laugh at him. The doctor said the laughing dad did at that fool pup did more to cure him than any medicine. I couldn't find a pup, Miss Paula; but the cook-house cat out at the Nugget had kittens and that was the next best thing I could think of, so I brought your dad a white one. I've got him here."

He pulled the cover off a box he was carrying and a double handful of white fur clawed up over the edge of the box and blinked at Paula, and I saw the anger leave her face and I knew that Spain had done just what he'd aimed to do. He could say that the kitten was for Manning Doran if he wanted to, but I knew it was for Paula and I knew it was the one best thing he could have done for her.

She said, "You pretty, cunning, tiny thing."

And then she looked at Spain, and smiled. "You knew I couldn't go on hating a man who'd do a thing like this, didn't you?"

Spain grinned.

"You sure you hated me?" he asked.

She started to answer, and stopped, and then nodded. "Yes. I hated you, all right. I hated you more because I knew I was being unjust and you were so nice about it."

"Nice! Me?" Spain laughed. "I hated you, too. Plenty! I had to put my hands in my pockets to keep from slapping you! You've got sharp claws . . . Only I knew it wasn't the lasting kind of hatred."

Paula nodded again. "Maybe that's what made me hate you so; knowing I'd have to admit, sooner or later, that I was wrong. I *was* wrong, you know. I had no right to say—what I did say—about your dad. I'm sorry."

The kitten crawled out of its box and up Paula's arm to her shoulder and arched itself to rub against her cheek. She put up one hand to steady it, but she was looking at Spain.

He said, very softly, "Your eyes are just the color of the wild flowers on a certain hill I know, down in Texas. The color they are in the early morning, with the dew on them."

It wasn't abrupt or out of place, the way Spain said it. Every word he'd said to her, every time his eyes had touched her as they stood there, he'd been making love to her. Paula must have known that. I don't think any girl could keep from knowing it.

She did know it, for her voice was a little breathless as she answered him. "Isn't it a little—soon—to be making speeches like that? Just when we've stopped hating each other?"

"Soon?" Spain's laugh was reckless, gay, full of self-confidence. "I'm twenty-four! I'll soon be old! We can't waste time!"

He turned then, and mounted, and the white gelding lifted under him, and Paula stood watching him until he turned to wave at her from down the

road. I turned away from the window so she wouldn't be reminded that I was there. She was smiling as she came up the steps onto Doc's front porch. It was a soft, secretive little smile, like the smile I've seen sometimes on the face of a mother as she looks at her baby when she thinks no one is watching.

I thought, "This is the second time Spain's licked Brick Zimmerman." And I was glad as I turned back to face Doran and Poe there by the bed. We Scots are sentimental folk.

Poe stood up as Paula came in. He started to speak to her, but he saw the kitten and whatever he started to say was forgotten. She made a picture, Paula did, all flushed and bright-eyed as she was, with the kitten purring at her throat.

She said, "Look, dad! Here's company for you. Mr. Spain brought it. He said he thought it would be good for you. That's right, isn't it, Doc?"

"Spain?"

It startled me to hear Doran question that name and to remember that he didn't know Spain, because it seemed to me that I knew him well. It's odd, I think, how close you can get to some men in just a few short days, and how some men you never get to know.

I didn't hear Paula's answer, because I was watching the blank astonishment on George Poe's face. We walked out then, and Poe halted just outside the door and looked at me.

"Spain!" he said. "That double-jointed streak o' cold blue lightning—spendin' his time huntin' up squalling cats! He *must've* washed it! When I saw it Saturday it was the color of coal-smoke. I'll be damned!"

I grinned at him. But as we walked down the path toward the street I heard Paula's silver laughter mingling with Manning Doran's reluctant mirth and I knew that, no matter what Spain had paid for that cat, in time or cash, he'd bought a bargain.

CHAPTER VIII

"TOO LUCKY TO LIVE!"

THE poker game at the corner table in the Paystreak was something of an institution. It wasn't like our Sunday games, which were more or less private affairs, but it was tacitly understood that the corner table belonged to a certain group mostly of pretty solid citizens. George Poe played there, and Olliphant and Zimmerman. Doran and several of the ranch owners sometimes sat in when they were in town, and three or four others, including Bob Harvey, made up the usual group. It was a no-limit game and stakes were apt to be pretty stiff, so it wasn't any place for grocery clerks.

Dal Spain had been a fixture in that game, afternoons and evenings ever since he'd hit town. Zimmerman had practically forced Spain to take a hand that Monday after Spain's arrival, and since then there'd been no question about Spain's welcome, if for no other reason than that he was winner and everybody wanted a chance to get even with him.

I'd been surprised, a little, at the way Spain stuck to town. Knowing his purpose in coming to Comanche, it seemed a little odd to me that he wasn't scouring the Shogun hills for traces of The Hood. Not that he'd have been apt to find anything, but it just seemed to me that that was the natural thing for him to do. Playing poker at the corner table in the Paystreak didn't quite fit into the picture of a young man with a serious purpose in life. I was beginning to wonder if I'd misjudged the youngster after all.

What I'd learned this morning, about Spain's daylight-to-noon rides, came nearer to fitting in with my notion of what Spain should be doing, but it wasn't enough. I had the old-fashioned idea that revenge was a man-sized, full-time job; and I was picturing Spain as an avenger. He was, too. Only he had his own way of working at it, and he didn't let the job sour him.

That evening after Spain gave the kitten to Paula, the game at the corner table was well under way before Spain showed up. Zimmerman let out a bellow of greeting the minute Spain stepped through the door and Spain spoke to me and grinned at Lefty as he passed the bar. The early evening rush was over, so I shucked my apron and eased out from behind the bar and followed Spain.

I got a big kick out of watching him play, and I'd been thinking it wouldn't be a bad idea for me to sit into a game against him some time soon, just to see if I could break his luck. Poker is a little like gun-play in that respect; every man who plays always figures he's a little better than the average and when he sees a good man in action he sort of yearns to try him out. I'd watched Spain carefully and I had a hunch I could beat him. At poker, I mean. I hadn't any illusions about matching his gun-play.

It took a considerable amount of persuading to get Spain to sit into the game this evening and I knew why, or thought I did. Brick Zimmerman was sitting in Spain's chair. That is, Brick was sitting in the chair in the corner, the one Spain had chosen the first time he played there and the one he had occupied each time since. I almost mentioned it, but then it occurred to me that Brick probably had as much reason as Spain did for wanting his back to the wall; and it wasn't any of my business anyway.

Spain sat down finally in the only chair available; one that put him with his back to a window. He didn't like that, I knew; but he turned himself so he could see the door, which was, after all, the most likely source of danger. Not that he was expecting danger, exactly. What I'm trying to say is that Spain had that inbred vigilance that belongs to men who live by the gun. Sitting with his back to a window—things like that—made him uncomfortable, maybe without his really knowing why.

It was a good while later before a man cashed in his few remaining chips and gave me a chance to sit into the game, and by that time Spain was comfortably winner and Zimmerman was enough loser so he had dropped his boisterous good humor and was cursing his luck for all to hear. I took Spain for ten dollars and Zimmerman for eighteen in an initial flurry over a third five in the hole dealt me by Zimmerman, and Brick ripped his cards in two and demanded a new deck. Spain only grinned.

I got nothing after that and was sitting back, letting the new wear off the cards, when it came my turn to deal the hand that added the final straw to Zimmerman's growing ill humor.

Spain's first up card was an ace and he slid out a blue chip. Zimmerman's first was a king. On the second round Zimmerman paired his king, and bet. Spain raised.

Well, on the face of it, that looked like a pretty strong sign that Spain had his aces backed up; one in sight and one in the hole. Zimmerman thought so, too, and grumbled something about the best he could get was second-best hands.

The next round didn't help Spain, but Zimmerman caught a nine and I had a hunch that it paired his hole-card. He bet his pair of kings and Spain raised, and Zimmerman raised back—which was sure proof that my hunch was correct. Spain called the raise.

And, on the last go-round, Spain caught another ace.

He looked at Zimmerman grinned,

I was going for my gun as I yelled.

and made as if to drag the pot. But he stopped and looked flustered, as if he'd done something he hadn't intended to do, and said, "You satisfied, Zimmerman?"

The rest of us were out of it by then, but Brick said, "Hell! How much d'you bet?"

Spain shrugged and looked apologetic and—slid a hundred dollars into the pot.

BRICK swore and squirmed. He had a call coming and he knew it; but a hundred dollars on two pairs against a hand that had looked like three aces all the way was pretty strong. Brick counted out a hundred dollars worth of chips and shuffled them in his hands and stacked them and swore some more.

"You got three aces, as sure as hell!" he said. "You go to hell. I'm out. Look there!"

He slapped his hole-card face-up on the table. It was a nine, all right—two pairs, kings and nines. "The best damn hand I've held tonight, and I get it against three aces! Damn you, Spain, you're too lucky to live."

I glanced at him quick when he said that, because it occured to me that he

might mean it. But Spain went right on smiling, tossed his cards across to the next dealer, and raked in the pot.

What happened next is bad poker ethics, but it's a thing you'll often see done, in spite of that. The new dealer picked up the cards in such a way that Spain's hole-card was on the bottom of the deck, where he could look at it. He looked—and laughed.

Well, I saw the card, too, and it was a deuce. Spain had forced the pot all the way on nothing at all, had finally paired his lone ace and had used that pair to bluff Zimmerman out of a pot Zimmerman could have won. It was nice nervy poker; the kind of thing Brick couldn't stand. And the laugh that went up as the rest of the crowd caught on to what had happened came very near to wrecking a certain three-day-old avowal of friendship.

Brick kicked his chair back and stood up, and if I ever saw cold hatred in a man's eyes I saw it in Zimmerman's then as he glared down at Spain. I knew, then, that Brick's recent friendliness to Spain had been a pose, and I wondered why he'd taken the trouble to do it. Brick was standing hunched forward a little, with his elbows out the way he always set himself to make his draw, and I thought sure he was going to reach.

I said, "Brick!" But that wouldn't have stopped him.

Something did stop him, though. It wasn't until later that I understood what that something was.

Brick straightened gradually, and laughed. It was ugly, grudging laughter, but it broke the spell. It puzzled me.

He said, "Sorry, Spain. I lost my temper, I reckon. Cards have been runnin' against me so long it's a wonder I got any temper left to loose. Deal me out, a hand or two. I'll get me a drink at the bar and see if I can change my luck."

So Zimmerman was at the bar talking to Lefty Sullivan when the thing that happened next happened.

I'd drawn the diamond five down and the club deuce and the spade seven up, and there was already a pair showing on the next deal, so I folded up and sat back. Spain had his chair tippd back on its hind legs and was leaning forward, teetering on it, when something moved in the window back of him.

I saw it, and I thought for a minute that it was nothing but a reflection in the glass of some movement inside the room. But then I thought, "The window's up! There's no glass there!" . . . and saw the gun.

It caught the shimmer of light as it slid up over the windowsill, and I saw the vague outline of a head behind it. Not a face; just a black shape with a hat on it.

I yelled, "Look out, Spain! Behind you! The window—"

I don't know how I knew Spain was the target that gun was aimed at, but I did. I was going for my gun as I yelled, and I remember thinking, "I'll have to cut this one awful close to Spain's head."

But I needn't have worried about that. Spain's chair tipped back and he went with it, clearing the way for my shot, before I'd said a single sentence.

Even then, the man outside that window could have dropped Spain if he'd fired as soon as he got his gun in line. He didn't. He drew his bead and called Spain's name. I heard his voice cut into mine somewhere between my first two words. And he raised up close to the window so I got a clear look at him. Not that that did me much good. All I saw was a hat with a black mask under it, a mask that covered all the fellow's face.

I fired straight through the space Spain had occupied a second ago and I saw my slug cut splinters from the window-sill. The gun there jerked a little, and I'd almost swear I saw the slug

come out of it. What I saw, I suppose, was the muzzle-blast of smoke and fire.

Something hit me then. It felt as if somebody had caught me between the eyes with a rock. I thought, "Well, this is it! Funny that I'd be killed this way by a bullet intended for another man, when so many men have tried to kill me for myself alone!"

BUT before the lights went out for me I saw the rest of it. I don't know how long it takes for a man to lose consciousness after he's hit in the head with a forty-five caliber slug, but it can't be long. From that I gather that what happened happened pretty fast.

Spain hit the floor. I heard his chair crash down. He'd gone over backward, but by the time I got my eyes on him he was on his knees, facing the window. He'd made his draw as he fell. I saw his gun, saw the fire licking out of it, and it struck me as being mighty strange that I couldn't hear the shots. He fired at least three times. The last slug grazed the window-frame, the left side of it, six inches above the sill.

And I went down. I even remember feeling the table tilt under me and being sorry I'd messed up the stacks of chips. They'd have a hell of a time figuring out who was winner now, I thought.

I couldn't have been out very long, because when I came to I was still lying there in the wreckage of that poker game and Doc White hadn't got there yet. The first thing I heard, before I even opened my eyes, was Brick Zimmerman's voice.

"It was The Hood, all right," Brick was saying. "I got a good look at him. He was a big hombre, and he was wearin' that black mask."

I didn't open my eyes right away. It struck me that Zimmerman was stretching things a little. How could Brick have seen that the man at the window was "a big hombre?" Only the man's head had been visible, and that head hadn't been so very far above the window-sill. Of course, the man might not have been standing erect. But if he had been standing straight, and if he was a big man, it seemed to me his head should have been higher up in the window.

And it *hadn't* been high up. Spain's bullet had struck the window-frame not more than six inches above the sill. If Spain was shooting six inches above the window-sill, what he was shooting at was in that neighborhood. I couldn't picture Angel Spain's son throwing lead very far off a target.

Somebody else—I think it was Lefty—said, "It don't look like t' me it's any use, but I wish to God Doc'd hurry! Mac's bleedin' bad."

I opened my eyes then and saw Spain bending over me. He was smiling.

"Feel better, Mac?" he asked softly.

I nodded, and wished I hadn't. Moving my head started a trip-hammer going inside my skull and I said a few words that were, I hope, short and to the point, though not worth repeating. When I had finished, Spain nodded approvingly.

"Doc'll be here in a minute," he said. "In the meantime—thanks, Mac. You saved my life. It ain't worth much to anybody else, maybe, but it's right valuable to me. I won't forget it."

I think Spain would have saved his own life without my butting in. I think that the man at the window, whoever he was, seriously underestimated Spain when he took time to call Spain's name. Once he'd done that, he would have had a fast-moving target to shoot at, that's a certainty; and Spain's slugs hit that window nearly as soon, and nearer the mark, than mine had done.

That set me to wondering again why the man at the window had called Spain's name before he shot. He must have had a reason. Shots through windows like that are furtive; the act of a

killer who doesn't dare face his victim. This man could have done his work and gone. Instead, he had announced himself. I couldn't figure it.

Doc White came finally and for a little while I was too busy gritting my teeth and thinking up new swear words to pay much attention to other things. But the worst of the hurting stopped at last and Doc sat back on his heels and grinned at me.

"I always knew," he said, "that the Scots were hard-headed. But if anybody'd told me before tonight that a Scotchman's head would turn bullets, I'd have thought he was exaggeratin'. Looks now as though it might be true. This slug hit a couple of inches above your eyebrow and didn't even make a dent. It even skidded along the bone a few inches, lookin' for an opening. There wasn't one. So all it left was a scalp-wound."

"And a headache," I said.

"Sure the headache ain't from drinkin' your own whiskey?" Doc asked insultingly. "You're all right, Mac. You're hard to kill."

WELL, I knew that. But, all right or not, they had to carry me to my room and it wasn't a pleasant journey either, for me. I was sick as a dog before they'd got me up the stairs in the Brill House and into my bed in my room across the hall from Zimmerman's. But it was better than having a bullet in my brain, at that.

Doc left me soon to take care of a woman who, he said, "was really sick." I didn't try to keep him. Maybe I didn't rightly appreciate Doc's brand of humor. After he left the crowd thinned out and finally only Spain was left with me. He sat in a chair beside my bed and looked at me and didn't talk, and that was a relief. I had a hunch that he would do some talking later, and I hoped he would; but right then I was near crazy.

Spain got up finally and tiptoed across the room to the window, looking down on Fremont Street. That worried me.

"It seems to me," I said, "that you ought to've had enough lessons for one day about windows."

He grinned and came over and sat down beside me.

"This ought to prove," he said softly, "if it needed proof, that this hooded bandit of yours ain't Angel Spain. Eh, Mac?"

I had to admit that it made sense. Angel Spain would hardly try to kill his own son.

I grunted.

"It ought to prove he ain't Brick Zimmerman, too," I said. "Or do you think Brick jumped out the window from where he was standing, over by the bar, took a shot at you, and then hopped back again—sort of between winks, or something?"

"It wasn't Zimmerman," Spain said, and frowned. "Still, just because somebody else wore a black hood once don't prove that Zimmerman never wore one . . ." His voice trailed off and I wondered where his thoughts were taking him.

I laughed.

Spain looked at me. He leaned forward suddenly and gripped my arm. "Look, Mac! Why d'you think that jasper called my name? Why didn't he just shoot and duck? He could have, you know. Why didn't he?"

He didn't wait for me to answer. "I'll tell you why! It was because he wanted to be seen! He stood close to the window, where the light would hit that mask he wore, and he called my name so two or three of you, at least, would look at him."

"But why?"

"Why? Because, besides downin' me, that jasper was fixin' up an alibi! Not an alibi for himself; an alibi for The

Hood! The real Hood, I mean. If he was seen there at that window, wearing the hood, and if the real Hood could prove that he was somewhere else—"

I said, "Man, you're crazy!"

But Spain didn't even hear me.

"That means," he said slowly, "that the real Hood was there—in the Paystreak!"

I laughed again.

Spain frowned at me. "It's just a hunch," he said. "But—I'm right! One man wearing the hood while the other jasper fixes himself a sure-fire alibi. It don't have to be the first time, either. . . Why, hell! Of course that's it! Why didn't I think of that before!"

I tried to make my voice sound bored.

"Now what?" I asked.

"Two men," Spain said. "Both posing as The Hood. One gets an alibi while the other one pulls off a job; then he pulls a job while the other one gets an alibi. See, Mac? Two men . . ."

I looked at him. His eyes were blank, with a far-off look in them.

"Two men," he said. "Or even three—"

He stood up then. "I'm sorry, Mac. Excitement's bad for you. You get some sleep."

He left me then, closing the door gently behind him. But I didn't sleep. I had too much to think about.

CHAPTER IX

TWO-WAY DYNAMITE

ZIMMERMAN came up to see me later that night and we talked until Doc White dropped in soon after midnight to give me some medicine. It was strong talk and it must have been strong medicine, too, for I dropped off to sleep before Doc had left and that was the last I knew until noon next day when they brought me my breakfast.

It was while I was eating that I heard the hammers. My room was one of the front upstairs rooms in the Brill House and the sound came from the rear and to the south, so it was muffled. But it bothered me. That, and the noises from the street. People talking, doors slamming, wagons rumbling by, laughter. Ordinarily, they'd have been just ordinary noises; but cooped up here in my room they made me feel isolated and cut off from things. I wasn't used to that. That hammering was especially irritating. It came from the direction of the Paystreak and I couldn't figure what anybody could be building there.

I stood it as long as I thought I could and then I decided, to hell with Doc's orders! I got up. I was pretty weak and moving started my head to aching again, but I got as far as the window anyway. There was nothing startling to be seen, of course. I hadn't expected that there would be. Tom Olliphant was tacking some sort of a handbill onto the billboard over by the post office and there was a crowd around him. The bill was red; I saw that much, even if the intervening heads did prevent me from reading the lettering. And of course I couldn't see the source of all that hammering.

I was still standing there by the window when Paula Doran and Spain came around the corner of the hotel. I heard them before I could see them. They were running hand in hand like a couple of kids, and they were laughing. I had to grin in sympathy. But I figured they were coming to see me, and I knew they'd tell Doc White on me if they found me up, so I hustled back to bed. I had to hustle, because I could hear them coming up the stairs. I just made it. I was barely stretched out again, trying to slow my breathing down to normal, when they burst in.

They'd run all the way down the hill from Doc White's hospital, through the lobby and up the stairs, and Paula's face was flushed and she was breathing too fast to talk coherently. Spain was grinning. Both of them tried to speak at once.

"Guess what—"

"Score one for The Hood, Mac—"

I had to grin. They stood, still holding hands, looking like a pair of life-long sweethearts instead of like two people who'd known each other less than a week. But it goes like that sometimes. Two people meet and—click! It was like that with Spain and Paula Doran. They'd come a long way toward friendship in a short time. I could see that, that morning.

"Tell him, Dal—Well, I'll tell him. Mac! The money's back! Dad slept late and when he waked up there was the money, all of it, right beside his pillow! Can you imagine that? Now, why do you suppose—?"

"Money? What money?"

"Why, the money The Hood took when he shot dad. The four thousand dollars."

"But how—?"

"He must've tossed it in through the window, while dad was asleep. Isn't it wonderful, Mac? Dad's going to get well, and now we've got the money back. If you only knew how we needed that money, too! Oh, Mac, I'm so happy I could yell!"

"You *are* yelling," I told her. "Now, Spain, what's all this foolishness?"

"It's true," Spain said. He was looking at me with a quizzical gleam in his eyes that I couldn't fathom. It was as if there was laughter deep inside of him and he was trying to hide it.

Something in his tone made Paula look at him.

"You think it makes sense? Well! You're singing a different tune than you sang a while ago. You didn't offer any startling explanation of the mystery when we were talking to dad and to Poe about it. All right, bright boy; explain!" She was laughing at him, but you could tell that there was a touch of resentment in her—resentment because he had held some knowledge back from her.

Spain shrugged. "Link Morgan's disappeared, hasn't he? Maybe his conscience got to hurtin' him."

It was news to me. But I was less interested in that, really, than I was in the by-play between Spain and Paula. It seemed, on the face of it, as if Spain had mentioned Link unwillingly. And Paula was mad. She still tried to carry it off as a joke, but this time resentment overbalanced the raillery in her tone.

"You beast!" she said. "Just when I'd almost decided to like you a little, you burst forth with a remark like that!"

Spain looked hurt. "It's true, isn't it?"

"Of course it isn't true! Not the way you said it—as if Link's going were a—confession. Link isn't in town, or so Poe said. But that doesn't mean anything. Link probably just rode out to the ranch for something; or maybe he hasn't left town, even. Maybe Poe just happened to miss looking in the right place for him. It's silly to think Link had any part in that hold-up! Why, Link Morgan isn't a thief! And, besides, he worships dad. He wouldn't—Oh, you make me mad!"

What Spain said next didn't help matters any, either.

"You've got it backward, haven't you? He likes your dad—and worships you."

Have I told you that Paula Doran was quick-tempered? She flared up in earnest now.

"I suppose that's another reason for accusing him of being a criminal!" She turned and sailed toward the door. But she hove to with her hand on the knob and tossed her head.

"Of all the low, despicable, small traits," she said, "I think sheer jealousy's the very worst!"

She slammed the door.

I LAUGHED, but I didn't laugh long. I began to think about Link Morgan, and to wonder why he'd run away. I couldn't see any sense in that. In the

first place, I hadn't supposed that Link knew he was under suspicion. And, in the second place, Poe had said he didn't want Spain or me to let out anything about his suspicions regarding Link, and now Spain had spilled it to Paula. I mentioned that.

"I haven't said that Poe suspected him," Spain said. "I just hinted that maybe I suspected him."

Which seemed to me to be the rankest sort of sophistry, and I was still calling Spain a traitor and a fool and other things when Lefty Sullivan come in. Lefty had a folded sheet of paper in his hand and a broad grin on his face and he hardly waited to ask me how I was before he turned to Spain.

"This McCoy'll knock his ears down!"

"It's all set, Dal," he said. "Olliphant's postin' the bills now. It's going t' seem like old times t' me, sure."

So here was another one calling Spain by his first name, I thought. First Paula, and now Lefty. Well, it didn't take a person long to fall for him. I could vouch for that, in my own case.

"What's all set?" I asked. I was getting mighty tired of being left out of things.

"Why, the fights," Lefty said. "Oh, I forgot. You don't know about that, do you? You see, it all happened this mornin'. Seems like there's been a lot o' talk about this boxin' we've been doin', and folks are takin' a big interest in it. This mornin', a delegation rides over from Lyman Junction and says they hear we think we got the world by the tail when it comes to fist-fightin', which bein' the case they beg to differ with us. It seems they've got a hard-rock miner over there by the name of McCoy that claims to be able to lick his weight in wildcats. Says he's a pro and would've been welterweight champ if the titleholder hadn't been scared o' him."

Lefty paused, then said contemptuously, "I never heard o' him."

"So I suppose," I said, "you feel that it's up to you, game leg and all, to take him down a peg."

"Not me," Lefty said. "Spain."

My obvious amazement tickled him. He unfolded the paper he was carrying and held it up. Black letters on yellow paper. The one I'd seen Olliphant tacking up across the street had been red. There'd be blue ones and pink ones and lavender ones and green ones, I knew. Those were the stock colors provided by the Comanche Job Printing Company for handbill jobs.

But this was larger and gaudier than any sale bill. This was a work of art. The headline lettering was so big that the ink hadn't dried on it yet and it was smeared in places. I can see it now:

!!! PRIZE FIGHTS !!!

Wednesday, May 9th, 9:30 P.M.
In the new Prize Ring back of the Paystreak Saloon

MAIN BOUT

Cowboy Versus Miner For The Championship of Comanche County
Ten Rounds to a Decision between

THE COMANCHE KID 165 lbs.
(Dallas Spain)

and

SLUGGER McCOY 170 lbs.
(of Lyman Junction)

SEMI-FINAL BOUT

Ten Rounds to a Decision between

BRICK ZIMMERMAN 180 lbs.

and

TOM OLLIPHANT 192 lbs.

The bill also promised "Four Preliminary Bouts of Five Rounds Each, Contestants to be Arranged. Forty Rounds of Fast and Furious Fighting."

"Not bad, eh?" Lefty said proudly. "The boys are buildin' a ring out back o' the Paystreak now. Everything'll be ready by night, though."

So that accounted for the hammering I'd heard.

"It's terrible!" I said, "Besides giving away weight, Spain's a rank amateur against a professional. This McCoy'll knock his ears down."

Lefty glared at me.

"Want t' bet on that?" he said swiftly. Then, half apologetically: "Listen! This McCoy never was good or I'd have heard of him. And suppose he *was* fair; he claims he was welterweight. He'll fight tonight at a hundred and seventy pounds; which means he's carryin' twenty-odd extra pounds—"

"Of good hard muscle!" I said. "He's a miner, ain't he?"

"No fat, no," Lefty admitted. "It's muscle, all right. But it's hard, lumpy muscle, with no kick in it. Muscle or fat, it's weight, ain't it? And it'll slow him down. Spain's underweight, if anything; and he's all speed. He'll go around McCoy like a cooper goes around a barrel. You wait and see."

I looked at Spain.

"Comanche Kid!" I said sarcastically. Spain grinned a sheepish little grin and ducked his head and I saw his ears get red. "Comanche Kid!" You ain't no native son, and you ain't a prize fighter. You'll find that out!"

But I was wrong. I spent a lot of time being wrong, it seems like, those days. Spain took McCoy that night in seven rounds. By a knockout. I didn't see it, of course; but Lefty told me about it afterward. Spain was nervous at first, fighting his first real fight, and he spent the first four rounds on the old bicycle, letting McCoy chase him. The crowd didn't like that, but Lefty said it was the smartest thing Spain could've done. Four rounds of it and McCoy was walking on his heels. And the crowd got its money's worth, from then on.

"Then," Lefty said, "Spain started borin' in. Just feelin' his way at first; sort o' findin' out if he really could land a punch or not. He could. He landed plenty. He had McCoy lookin' like a fresh slab o' sirloin before it was over. Then McCoy stings the kid with a grazin' right and that's the biggest mistake he ever made.

"It made Spain mad. I saw his eyes thin down and sort o' shine, and he went weavin' in with both hands cocked and that was the end of it. He poked a left into McCoy's bread basket and when McCoy's guard comes down, Spain lets him have it. He shot his right, and a left, and another right and another left, so fast I couldn't count 'em. That was because McCoy was propped against the ropes. The first right would've been enough, only McCoy was back against the ropes and couldn't fall. Spain didn't know that, so he kept shootin'. Mac, that Spain's the fastest thing I ever saw. And he can hit. He's dynamite with either hand. He's good!"

Zimmerman took Olliphant, too, by a knockout. That didn't surprise me. Olliphant might have the skill, but Zimmerman was tough. He battered Zimmerman plenty in the first few rounds, but after that he'd shot his bolt and Zimmerman could cut him down.

The four preliminaries were just noisy brawls with a lot of wild swinging and nobody hurt; but the crowd loved it. When it was over, all you could hear for days was fight talk.

That, and talk of The Hood.

THERE was always talk about The Hood in Comanche, and that night added fresh impetus to it. Because, while Dal Spain, alias Comanche Kid, was knocking out Slugger McCoy in the prize ring back of the Paystreak, Angel Spain, alias The Hood, was tying up the night watchman in the office of the Ascension Mine, setting a blast of dynamite-juice into the mine safe, and getting away with better than six hundred ounces of dust and nuggets from the Ascension's Number 2 shaft.

Maybe it wasn't the Angel; maybe it was somebody posing as him, as Dal Spain claimed. But it was The Hood, all right. The night watchman got a good clear look at him, and at his guns; those same gold-inlaid Smith & Wesson guns, pearl butts and all.

This guard—his name was Simpson—said he was trying the door to the mine office when the hooded jasper steps around the corner of the building and drops a gun on him. The Hood took Simpson's keys, opened the mine office, dragged Simpson in and shut the door.

He tied Simpson up and lit a lamp. Simpson couldn't get over talking about the fellow's nerve, lighting a lamp that way. Of course, there was only the door and one window in the little building the Ascension calls its office, and the window faces west, away from town; so it really wasn't so wonderful. But Simpson thought it was.

He left Simpson tied and gagged beside the door while he went over and started work on the safe. "He had somethin' in a bottle, and he had a cake o' soap. I seen him take 'em out of his pockets. Then he knelt down beside the safe and I could hear him workin', but I couldn't see him, on account o' the bookkeeper's desk bein' between us."

Simpson didn't know how long The Hood worked on the safe, but pretty soon he came back to where Simpson was lying and said, "She'll blow in a minute," and Simpson heard an explosion and that was the last thing Simpson knew. Something hit him over the head right then, and Simpson went out like a light. There was a big knot on Simpson's head when they found him, and a heavy glass inkwell from the bookkeeper's desk was lying beside him, so it was easy to figure that the explosion that hurled the inkwell across the room and that was what had knocked Simpson out.

Simpson said he thought it was about half-past ten when the man stuck him up, and that it couldn't have been more than fifteen minutes between then and the explosion. But he was wrong about that, because the Ascension office is less than a mile from town and plenty of people heard the explosion and checked the time. It went off at just a minute or two past eleven o'clock, just after the Comanche Kid had dropped McCoy.

For that matter, I could check the time, myself. Doc had left me some medicine to take at eleven o'clock and I had my watch on the chair beside my bed so I wouldn't forget it. But when eleven o'clock came I found I didn't have any water in my glass, so I banged on the floor and the night clerk came up to see what I wanted. He'd just opened my door when the explosion happened. The windows in the Brill House rattled and banged like an earthquake was shaking them. The clerk got white and looked at me and then turned and ran down stairs. It was a good hour later before I could get anybody's attention again. They were all too excited to think of me.

It was a hectic night, all right. It was breaking dawn before I ever got to sleep.

(To be continued)

Most men hated to sell him dogs. . . .

NOT IN THE OFFICIAL REPORT

by SEWELL PEASLEE WRIGHT

CONSTABLE Joseph Lane polished the second button of his scarlet tunic with the ball of his forefinger. It was a trick of his, when he was thinking out a deep one.

"So you finally killed him, did you?" he said slowly. The policeman's cold, ice-blue eyes met the defiant brown eyes of his prisoner. The killer moved restlessly and drew back his lips in a defiant grin.

"Quiet!" snapped Lane. "I want to figure this thing out for myself." He threw a couple of fresh sticks on the fire, and huddled closer to the blaze. Behind his back the frozen tarpaulin rattled in the wind.

"Let's see; you put up with Miller for nearly three years. That's a long time."

The policeman watched the sparks flickering off into the darkness, thinking of the man who had been killed.

He probably had had a given name, but nobody knew it. Even in making out his official report, the policeman had used the name by which the man was known throughout that section of the Province: "Big" Miller. Miller was a common enough name, but everyone know who Big Miller was—a freak of a man, six feet six or seven inches in height, with enormous shoulders, a face which looked as though it had been carelessly chipped out of solid rock, and a

voice which, even in his more amiable moments, was a cross between a snarl and a whine.

Big Miller had come into the country from God knew where and set himself up as a fur buyer. He had done well at it.

Most men were afraid of Big Miller. When he came bulking into their little camps they were dominated by the sheer hulking size of the man. And when he stared at them with his little round piggish eyes, so out of keeping with his massive face, and pounded their tables with his fist, they shrugged instead of haggling, or shaking their heads, and sold their fur—as little of it as possible—for what Big Miller offered them.

One man, Buck Dawson, had told Miller he'd be damned if he'd give his fur away, and Miller had merely stared at him grimly for a time and then gone on his way. A month or so after that Buck had gone out one morning and found all five of his dogs with their necks broken. It had been blowing and snowing all night, and there were no tracks, but no man of ordinary strength can break a dog's neck with his unaided hands.

Buck had come to Lane with his story, but the policeman had known there wasn't a chance of getting a conviction. It was obvious that Big Miller was guilty, but there wan't a shred of evidence. Just a motive, and the knowledge that he had the strength and the stomach for the job. Big Miller hated dogs.

"Better forget it, Buck," Lane had counseled, shaking his head. "I'd like to take him out, well enough, but we'd never make it stick. He's shrewd, don't forget that. He doesn't steal fur; he buys it. You don't really have to sell to him. He doesn't threaten. You can't arrest a man just because he's big and ugly and talks hard."

"Probably you're right, Joe," Buck had nodded, his yellow teeth grinding on the bit of his pipe. "Just the same, some day—"

"Chuck it!" Lane had commanded sharply. "Talk like that gets men like you into trouble."

And so Big Miller had gone on his way, buying furs—and dogs. Most men hated to sell him dogs even more than they hated to sell him fur, because in a country where dogs are a man's sole companions for months on end, and bear his burdens from dawn until dark, most white men have a definite respect, and a certain affection, for their dogs.

BIG MILLER had used plenty of dogs, reflected Lane grimly. Two, sometimes three strings a year. Every time Lane had run across him, Miller had new dogs in the string. Only old Pete, the big white-and-yellow wheel dog, had been able to survive Big Miller's whip. Miller did not use the lash to crack above a dog's head as a warning; Miller used the stiff, heavy butt of his whip, like a club. In Big Miller's heavy hands, the butt of a dog whip was a lethal weapon.

Men had come to Lane with choked voices and told him of things they had seen Miller do to dogs. Young Armand Ferrand had actually had tears in his dark eyes as he related how Miller had treated two dogs he had forced Armand to sell him.

And now Big Miller was dead, and there was not a man in all the country who would not brighten and smile grimly when he heard of Miller's passing.

It seemed like a peculiar bit of irony that the law should frown upon the killing of Big Miller. The law should be flexible enough to say, with all the people concerned, "Good riddance!" But the law and the Bible both spoke to the same effect: *"Thou shalt not kill!"*—and made no exception concerning the Big Millers of the world.

"And that," said Lane, glancing at his prisoner, "puts you in a tight place, my

lad!" His only response was a grim silence, and a watchful, vengeful stare.

Lane caressed the second button of his tunic, thoughfully. This was something more than a cold matter of justice; the personal element entered into the affair. He, Lane, had hated Big Miller. He had been watching and waiting for years, hoping for a chance to take him outside, a prisoner. To be forced into this position, to be the man to legally avenge Miller's death, went bitterly against the grain.

It was his duty, of course. And the Force was the devil and all for duty, with a capital D. Everything must be done according to regulations; except for the minor details, a man's thinking was all done for him.

And Lane had, so far, done his duty, according to the law, his oath and the regulations. He had placed the guilt beyond all reasonable doubt. He had done a difficult job of tracking, following a trail always half-obscured by drifted snow, and sometimes blotted out entirely for a hundred yards and more. He had made the arrest. His duty was clear. But—

The policeman reached in his pocket and pulled out a knife. It was a big knife with two heavy blades. He flipped one of them open, and slowly cut the strands of *baiche* which bound the prisoner.

"There you are," he said curtly. "Clear out!"

His erstwhile prisoner stared at him with curious eyes.

"I mean it, Pete," snapped Lane. "Hit the trail! I should shoot you as a dangerous beast, but I haven't the stomach for the job. After being Big Miller's wheel dog for three years, you deserve a little consideration. Even though you did tear his throat out, at last. Between you and me we'll call it mitigating circumstances. We just won't mention it at all in the official report."

Old Pete stood for an instant, rigid and suspicious. Then, with a snarl, he leaped beyond the circle of light cast by the fire, and disappeared into the bush.

The blade of the policeman's knife closed with a snap.

There's a first time for everything," he said, talking to himself as a man will who spends much of his life in silent places, and alone. "But see to it nothing of the sort happens again, Constable!"

"Bull, your past is logged with sin. . . ."

NO RIGHT OF WAY

by ROY de S. HORN

WHOOROOP! Whooroop! Captain Brodie of the tug *Maude* jerked the whistle cord and squalled for the right of way that was justly his. But the craft that had suddenly popped its nose out of the dock slip close alongside did not stop or even slow down. Captain Brodie let out a yell.

"Hey! What the hell—!"

What the hell, indeed. That oncoming craft not only seemed disrespectful of the *Maude's* course, but it seemed bent on pushing a passageway right through her engine-room.

With an oath Captain Brodie jerked the wheel out of young Tommy Shaw's hands, whirled it hard over. And at the same time his right leg shot out and kicked frantically at the foot-cord he had rigged to the *Maude's* engine-room bell. The *Maude* groaned, shook all over with the reversing of her powerful screw, and then began to go astern.

But not fast enough. Even with the swing of the *Maude's* bow there came a crash, a rasping bump. Captain Brodie, his hands torn from the wheel by the violent shock, skidded on the reeling deck and sat down. Then he clawed to his feet again. The *Maude's* threshing had stopped. There was the bang of a door, a salty oath. And from the depths of the *Maude's* engine-room a lean, freckled face with scowling eyes and an oil-

smeared nose emerged into the open.

"For cat's sake! What the hell is this —a tug or a roller-coaster?"

Captain Bill Brodie—"Navy Bill" Brodie—only continued to cuss a blue streak.

"Uh-huh," announced the freckled redhead with deep sarcasm. "I see it *is* a roller-coaster! And me without no ticket for the ride!"

"Roller-coaster—?" At last Captain Brodie found printable words. "Look there!"

Red Peters, chief engineer, oiler, and whole black gang of the *Maude*, looked in the direction of his captain's glance. Comprehension came into his eyes. "Huh! A damn blue-stacker!"

A blue-stacker it was—a tug with a bright blue stack, and half as big again as the *Maude*. And to prove that the collision was no accident, out of her wheelhouse window was now sticking a round red face above a bull neck. And the round face was grinning triumphantly.

"You double-decked, triple-damned blankety-blank so-and-so!" yelled Captain Brodie. "Didn't you see us? Didn't you hear us? Don't you know no rules of the road?"

"Well, I didn't hear nothing, but I did see and smell something." The blue-stacker's words were only less insulting than his snear. "But I don't know no rules of the road that says you got to give right of way to a floating hunk of garbage!"

"Garbage—!" Captain Brodie choked. "Bull Blanton, the next time I catch you ashore, I'll show you who's garbage!"

"Yeah?" Bull Blanton gave a disbelieving snort. "Well, Garbage, I'll meet you in church—if you get there!"

And with a taunting jangle of bells, the tug *Spray*, of the Blue-Stack Towing Company, put on the power and breezed out into the open stream.

Captain Brodie let out another stream of scorching words. Red Peters listened admiringly for a moment, and then began to disappear, joint by joint, into his hot, roaring hole. "Well, Cap'n, the next time you go to ram a boat, I wish you'd sound 'Collision Quarters' first. I'm too old to get any more pleasure outa skidding around on my bottom in the bilges."

With his disappearance, Captain Brodie turned to young Tommy Shaw, bowman, sternman, and general deck force of the *Maude*. "Take the wheel, Tommy, while I go to look at the damage."

But the builders of the *Maude* had done their work in a day when honest work and honest material had been a part of every contract. A slanting dent and a fresh scraping of paint showed where the *Spray's* bow had bumped. But the *Maude's* stout strakes and even stouter fender had withstood further injury.

What made Captain Brodie mad as much as anything, though, was that he had been in a hurry. That was why he had been steering so close to the end of the slips, cutting every possible corner. For the North River was rushing out through the Narrows at a breakneck speed in its last surge before the turn. And strung out down the bay and all the way to Quarantine was anchored the whole sea-grist of the last twelve hours —liners, tankers, tramps, craft of all description, waiting impatiently for the incoming flood to make their way to their upriver docks.

And Captain Brodie knew he was not the only tug out hunting for a tow. All the uncontracted tugs in the harbor would be racing out to try to win a job from some of those incoming vessels. And the *Maude* was in desperate need of a job.

Not only Captain Brodie was aware of that fact, but Red Peters, down below, knew it too. He was feeding the fires all the oil they could take. The black smoke pouring from the *Maude's* funnel testified to that fact. Oil that cost

money. A lot of money. Captain Brodie groaned when he thought how much.

UP AHEAD the *Spray* was swishing along nonchalantly, her rope fenders scooping up the tide. Captain Brodie's Navy-trained soul writhed at the mere sight of such shiftlessness.

Now that they were getting toward the Narrows, water traffic grew thick and congested. Garbage scows, outward bound; tankers, freighters—even a liner or two—making their way seaward. And tugs—tugs—on all sides. All the tugs in the world, it seemed, hurrying and scurrying, vomiting black smoke from their funnels and kicking the water astern from their powerful screws.

"Ain't going to be nothing left for the tail-enders but a free ride back home," said Tommy Shaw speculatively.

But the *Maude* was closing up on the *Spray* ahead. Closing up hand over foot. And that was a matter, too, that brought a frown to Captain Brodie's face. The *Spray* was almost as fast as the *Maude*. She had no earthly right to be overtaken in such rapid fashion.

"We'll give the buzzard a blast and pass to starboard." Suiting the action to the word, Captain Brodie yanked the whistle cord and began to ease out.

There was no answer from the *Spray* —and that too was not according to regulations and the rules of the road. The answer came only when the *Maude's* nose was almost abreast the *Spray's* counter. And then it came, not as a responding blast of acquiescence, but as a whole flock of blasts—four of them, to be exact. At the same time the *Spray's* bow, too, sheered to starboard, putting her square across the *Maude's* course.

Whoop — whoop — whoop — whoop! That was the danger signal, the nautical equivalent of saying "Stay back! No passing here! Danger!" But the swerving of the *Spray's* bow said more than that. It said, "Come on—and the collision's all yours!"

Captain Bill Brodie's face grew hard, and then it grew suspicious. Dropping the *Maude* back out of danger, he stepped over and bellowed down the engine-room voice-tube.

"I waited a whole year for this!"

That voice-tube was Red Peters' own invention. No ordinary voice-tube was this, with whistle, buzzer, or bell-pull to call attention. It was a section of six-inch water main driven from the engine-room to the tug's wheelhouse, with both ends open, big enough almost for a man to get his head inside. A yell at one end came out like a megaphone bellow at the other. Now Red Peters' voice came snarling up in answer to Brodie's bellow.

"What the hell you trying to do—jerk that engine-bell out by the roots?"

"If I hadn't jerked that bell you'd have been busting your bottom again in the bilges," said Brodie tartly. "Listen,

Red, I want you to hang over that throttle of yours like a booze-hound over a bottle. And *jump* when I give you the bell. I want to do a little investigating."

"Investigating, huh? Well, you leave the bottom of the bay out of your investigations," was the sarcastic reply. "I ain't wearing no diving suit this morning."

Brodie turned to Tommy Shaw. "Now, kid, port a little. That's good—hold her." He rang up four bells and a jingle.

With a jerk the *Maude's* screw blades hit water again, and the *Maude* began to forge ahead. Up—up—onto the *Spray's* quarter again, this time to port.

From the wheelhouse window of the blue-stack tug the scowling face of Bull Blanton re-appeared. Simultaneously the blue-stacker began to edge inward.

"Git over, git over!" yelled Brodie fiercely. "Whadda you want—the whole bay?" He reached out and jerked the whistle cord. *Whoop—whoop!* The imperious demand for passage to port.

But the answer was again four warnin blasts. "Danger! No passing!" And the blue-stack tug continued to swing in the *Maude's* path.

Nor was that all. A string of dirty garbage scows, returning high and empty from the offshore dumping grounds, suddenly loomed in the same direction. Pinched between them and the blue-stack tug, Captain Brodie had to ring full speed astern and drop back again.

"Bull Blanton—you dirty road-hog!" he roared. "You're doing that on purpose. Now I *know* I'll beat your ears down when I catch you!"

The salty breeze brought back the jeering answer. "Yeah, you will—in a pig's pocket-book!"

THINGS were getting serious. Already they were at the tail end of the procession.

"Get below and take the engines and tell Red to come up here," snapped Captain Brodie to Tommy Shaw.

Red Peters clumped up the little ladder and into the wheelhouse, his eyes questioning. His steel-trap jaws were champing stolidly at a cud of tobacco.

"This blue-stacker so-and-so up ahead is hogging the whole bay!" said Brodie fiercely. "He's holding back and he won't let us pass, rules of the road or no rules of the road. You got any ideas?"

Red Peters cast a calculating eye over the situation ahead. An eye that had looked over many of the toughest situations on earth, from an oilfield in full boom to a seaport tied up with a longshoremen's strike.

"Road-hog, huh? Well, out in the Borger field one time there was a bunch of road-hogs. But we got rid of 'em. We just got hold of a big nitroglycerine truck—one of them well-shooter's outfits—and we drove her hell-bustin' right down the middle of the road. You shoulda seen them road hogs clearin' the right of way. Some of 'em busted their hacks right through fences and barns to be sure to give us plenty room."

"That 'ud be a swell idea, if this was a dirt highway, and we was a T-N-T truck," retorted Brodie. "But this ain't, and we ain't."

"Well, we might complain again to the port authorities."

"Complain!" Captain Brodie gave a snort. "And the blue-stack people would bring up a flock of lying witnesses, like they did last time, and prove it was *us* that was hogging the right of way! You're bright as hell this morning, Red!"

Captain Brodie's eyes were smoldering with all the helplessness of a motorist on a narrow road blocked by a lumbering truck ahead that will not give over and allow passage. And then as his eyes roamed shoreward, they all but burst into flame.

"I just wish I *did* have a T-N-T truck! I'd take her and smash her to hell right through the middle of that damn shack over there, even if I had to blow myself up with it!"

"Shack" was just as descriptive of the place in question as "shanty" would be, applied to Mr. Schwab's three million dollar chateau on Riverside Drive.

It was a summer place—an enormous summer place, the house and grounds covering the whole of a mile-long point that thrust itself far out into the bay. The house itself was as big as a hotel, surrounded like a hen with chickens, by dozens of garages, greenhouses, stables, servants' quarters and other adjuncts. At the very end of the point, perhaps a hundred yards from the great rambling mansion, was a colossal boathouse.

Not a seaman out of New York but knew that place. It was the summer home of old Peter Blue, owner among other things of the Blue Seal Export Company, the Blue Funnel Shipping Company, the Blue Streak Oil Company, the Blue Casualty and Marine Insurance Company; and last but not least, of the Blue Stack Towing Company.

Red Peters looked and gave a yawn.

"You wouldn't get the old pirate even if you did blow it up now. He's in town, if he ain't in Europe. All you'd do would be to make fertilizer outa yourself and maybe a caretaker or two."

His eyes roamed forward again.

"Ship ahead without no tug. And there's a Swede tramp further out there."

Captain Brodie's face brightened. "The freighter's a Blue Funnel ship—the *Merchant Queen*—that's where the *Spray's* heading, I reckon. But the tramp is a bet. Now let's see that damn road hog try to be two places at once!"

The Blue Funnel freighter, a big single-stacker with the bright blue band of its house mark brilliant on its funnel, was already up-anchored and underway, creeping slowly ahead as it waited for its tug. The *Spray* was racing toward it, smoke pouring from its stack. And out beyond, toward the lower bay, the dingy Swedish tramp was already clanking in her ground gear.

"Give her the gun!" yelped Brodie, easing the wheel over slightly. "We can reach her before any other tug around here!"

Under full power the *Maude* surged ahead, bearing slighty off to port and toward the tramp.

And then an amazing thing happened. The big Blue Funnel freighter *Merchant Queen* too began to swing off to port. Her screw began to churn up increased speed. Faster and faster she moved, putting herself squarely across the *Maude's* course. At the same time, with a jeering blast, Bull Blanton and the *Spray* swerved to starboard and shot the freighter on toward the Swedish tramp.

Raging with the dirtiness of it, Captain Bill Brodie spun his wheel around, rang for full speed astern, and slipped out from under, just in time to avoid crashing the towering freighter's bow above him. Churning and rolling, the *Maude* made a half circle and lay quartering in the sea. By that time the *Spray* was already far on its way. Even as Brodie watched she rounded up alongside the tramp, hailed with a megaphone, and a moment later shot a heaving line aboard.

"There's the answer." Red Peters pointed a stubby finger back toward Manhattan where a belated Blue-stack tug was hurrying out to take the freighter's hawser that Bull Blanton had passed up. "They ganged up on us to give the blue-stackers both tows. We might as well go back to town. Nothing left out here now."

Indeed there was not. The last unattached ship had already taken on a tug and was beginning the last pull in to dock. Captain Brodie gave a vengeful snarl.

"Yeah, we might as well go back to town. But the first thing I do after that will be to look up Bull Blanton. And it won't be in church, either!"

THE war between Navy Bill Brodie and the combined Peter Blue interests went back for two years. Went all the way back, in fact, to a time when for one brief trip Brodie had been first mate of a Blue Funnel ship, the *Royal Duke*.

They had been speeding home from Europe with a strong passenger list and old Peter Blue himself aboard. And off Georges Bank they had run into a dirty fog. First Mate Brodie had had the watch.

First Mate Brodie had, in accordance with maritime regulations, promptly set extra lookouts, started the automatic fog-whistle, slowed to half speed, and sent word below to the ship's captain to that effect.

But it was not the captain who had come up on the bridge. It was a little red-faced, pot-bellied man with eyebrows like a thundercloud.

"What's the idea of cutting speed when we're almost into port?" demanded the pot-bellied stranger angrily.

"Fog always calls for half speed," retorted Mate Brodie impatiently. "And who the hell are you? Passengers are not allowed on the bridge."

"Who am I? You'll find out who I am," the pot-bellied man roared furiously. "I'm Peter Blue! And I'm telling you to resume speed again! Don't you know a day's loss costs thousands of dollars on a ship like this?"

Just then the captain came up on the bridge.

"Captain," said First Mate Brodie, "here's a passenger on the bridge trying to give me orders. Did you authorize his presence on the bridge?"

At that the little pot-bellied man gasped.

"Captain," he snapped, "I want this man relieved from duty immediately! Telling me—me, Peter Blue!—I can't come on the bridge of my own ship!"

The captain looked worried, turned to his chief officer. "Perhaps it wouldn't hurt to speed up a few knots, Mr. Brodie. After all, the fog isn't so thick"—

"I say it's fog! And the Maritime Regulations say 'half-speed'!" retorted Brodie. "I'll leave the bridge, Captain, if you say so—but only after being properly relieved."

"Relieve him, then!" bellowed Peter Blue. "Send up the second mate — the third officer—!"

But First Officer Brodie was going on. "—Also I'll insist that it be entered in the log *why* I was relieved, that it was because I refused to run full speed in a heavy fog. And you can't relieve me without so logging it!"

Peter Blue whirled on the captain. "Is that so?"

The captain nodded uncomfortably. "Yes—er—the regulations—"

But with a baleful snort, old Peter Blue was already going below. After a moment the captain muttered under his breath and followed him.

First Officer Brodie grinned and went back to his business, though he knew his goose was cooked.

But hardly had he pulled off his boots, after being relieved, before he felt the ship's screws beating an increased speed. The second officer was taking no chances with his future with the Blue Funnel Line.

Ten minutes later the *Royal Duke* ran a Gloucester fishing schooner down and sank her with all hands except the lookout and cook, who were picked up by another fisherman.

It gave First Officer Brodie no little pleasure to testify at the suit—testimony that cost the Blue Funnel Line exactly a hundred and fifty thousand dollars in life and property damages. But as he came out of the court room, old Peter Blue himself crowded into his path.

"You're fired—finished—through!" he snarled. "And now let's see you get another berth anywhere!"

And Peter Blue had not been talking through his hat, Brodie found when he

went around looking for that new berth. Magnate of industry, export, oil, and shipping, old Peter Blue's words carried weight. Every shipping door in the country seemed closed to Navy Bill Brodie.

Blacklisted, with no opening in sight, Brodie had done what many another man has done. He went into business for himself. With Red Peters, whom he had known ever since old Navy days, he had bought the *Maude*. At least he had bought the wheel of the *Maude* maybe. All the rest of it was covered deep with mortgages.

But even here old man Blue's vindictive force had followed them. All the jobs they had been able to get for a year had been an occasional pick-up of a tramp with no port connections, and in infrequent haul job around the waterfront.

On the top of that, the usual rules of the road no longer seemed to be in force as far as the *Maude* was concerned. They were rammed, bumped, banged, regardless of course and speed—and then sued for the resulting collision. And mostly by blue-stack tugs. And most especially by Bull Blanton's blue-stack tug *Spray*.

"Old man Blue must give the buzzard an extra bonus every time he bumps us." Brodie had snarled indignantly.

"The damned old pirate!" Red Peters had been likewise indignant. "I'd like to have him for a fender the next time one of his damn blue-stackers bumps us! But he's too foxy—he always hires men to do his dirty work for him."

"Well, we'll have to take it out on the hired men, then," snapped Brodie.

COMING back empty-handed from the bay that day, Bill Brodie at last put that threat into practice. He waited for Bull Blanton and caught him right at the edge of the dock.

"You said something about seeing me in church, Bull," he announced harshly. "Well, we'll call this church. Now how do you like this sermon?"

And *crash*—he sank a right jab square in the corner of Bull's mouth.

Bull Blanton was big and he was no coward. But, fired by fury, Brodie rose to superman heights. He battered down Blanton's guard, hammered him till he was a gasping wreck, and then set to work to dynamite the hulk.

"You ought to go to Sunday School, too, Bull; your past is logged heavy with sin!" *Bam!* — that was Sunday School. "And prayer-meeting — prayer-meeting 'ud do a lot for you!" *Wham!*—prayer-meeting coming up! "And baptising—why I bet you ain't even been baptized!" *Slam!* and Bull Blanton was baptized, literally as well as figuratively. For the last blow had taken him squarely on the knob and sent him spinning over the dock edge and into the water underneath, where he came up blowing and splashing like a grampus.

But fights, even victorious ones, bought no oil. And the *Maude's* tanks were down to the last gurgle, when by an amazing bit of luck Brodie found her a job. Towing garbage scows out to the dumping grounds while one of the regular contractor's tugs was laid up.

The garbage towing business was probably the only one around the port that Peter Blue had neglected to blacklist him with.

But it was a job. It paid for fuel oil, a badly needed new hawser, and helped stave off the creditors. And Brodie was properly jubilant when the third day, he passed the detested *Spray* down the bay.

Bull Blanton stared, gaped, and made the supreme insult of holding his nose and hauling the *Spray* up to windward.

"*Yah*—you better hold your nose!" jeered Brodie. "Take it away and I'll hit it again! How you like going to church, huh?"

It made him feel good all the way out. Made him feel so good, in fact, that

when for three days running he encountered the *Spray* away out near the dumping grounds he wasn't even suspicious.

On the third day he had something else to think about, anyway. It was an unseasonably warm day for so early in spring, and Captain Brodie sniffed the air with quick foreboding.

"Fog — it's just the same sort of weather we had off Georges, that night. It'll be thicker'n pea-soup before mid-afternoon."

Fog it was, even before noon. A solid blanket of it, almost a wall, rolling in so fast that Brodie looked at it and then at his scow, tugging astern like an unruly house, with increasing worry.

"Thicker'n clam-chowder, and a bay full of boats to get back through," he growled to Tommy Shaw. "We'll have our work cut out before we get back."

"'Nother tug, over there to port," said Tommy, glancing toward the rolling blanket.

"Never mind any other tug — you keep your eye on your steering," snapped Brodie. And then the fog reached out and took them in.

A fog off New York is no light matter. Inbound liners from Europe, upbound boats from Cuba and the South, shrieked and yowled. Foghorns on lighthouses ashore grunted and growled. All Captain Brodie could do was keep his own whistle sounding the deep warning of a tug with a tow, and do his best to keep the *Maude* headed right.

And then out of the wall of white it came, with no whistle warning whatever. A dark shape, rushing past so fast it was glimpsed one moment and gone the next. But in that brief glimpse Captain Brodie had made out hull and stack. He danced and swore. And then came a violent jolt.

Not the jolt of colliding hulls, but an odd double-jerk. The first yanked the *Maude* stern so suddenly that Brodie and Tommy Shaw were pitched from their feet. The next jerk sent the *Maude* ahead again so suddenly that she almost seemed to somersault as her engine raced and her propellor thrashed wildly.

"Loose! She's busted loose!" gasped Tommy Shaw, breathless from the impact of the wheel in his stomach.

"Busted loose, hell! That damn blue-stacker, she ran over the hawser!" yelped Brodie. "Blanton—he ran it down and cut it in two!"

Up from the engine-room popped Red Peters, cussing and oil-smeared.

"What'd you hit?" he bellowed. "She's busted loose! Where's the scow?"

"Yeah, where *is* the scow?" yelped Brodie. "Back there somewhere—God knows where! But we've got to find her! Can't leave a scow drifting around loose here in the path of all these ships!"

But there was no scow. After all their circling, questing search, there was still no scow. It seemed to have been swallowed up forever in the fog. A fog that drenched their faces and clothes, and seemed to mock at their frantic efforts.

But something did come out of that fog. A tug's toot, deep and resonant. Almost a jeer.

It is remarkable, the sound effects that a man can get out of a tug whistle.

Even before they went back, empty-handed, after the fog had lifted twenty-four hours later on a scowless sea, Brodie had an ominous hunch. When they reached the garbage contractor's dock he found he was right.

The scow was already there—and not only the scow, but an irate contractor.

"What's the idea, cutting my scow adrift?" he howled. "It'ud been out there yet if that blue-stack tug hadn't found it and towed it in. But you'll pay for it—you'll pay the whole towing charges!"

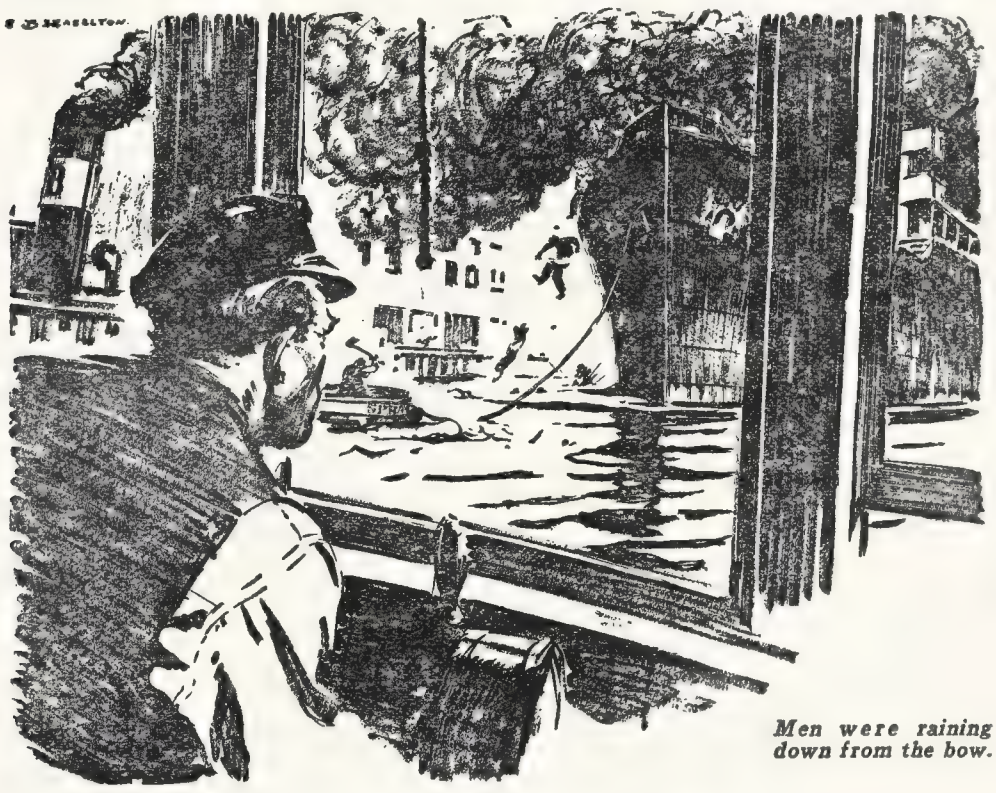
"Towing charges!" Red Peters grinned. "If you can raise anything on the

Maude, Old-timer, you can do more than we been able to do."

"Then I'll slap a libel plaster on that tub of yours till you do pay!"

There was only one thing to do, and Bill Brodie did it. He hauled out for Jersey and Jersey waters at full speed.

But even Jersey waters were no protection. State lines mean nothing to a libel suit. And Red Peters knew it.



Men were raining down from the bow.

"What's the use?" he moaned dolefully. "They'll get us in two-three days anyway."

"Let 'em," said Bill Brodie viciously. "All I want is Bull Blanton first—just one fair crack at him and the *Spray!* After that they can have the *Maude*—if they can tow in the pieces!"

Bill Brodie's mind was made up. Give him one chance to get even with the *Spray*, and then he didn't care what happened. The mortgagees would take over the *Maude*, anyway.

Right in the most likely place he hunted—and found. That place was the big shipping docks on the Jersey side—the shipping docks of the Blue Streak Oil Company and the Blue Funnel Line.

And the *Spray*, when he found it, was just swinging onto a hawser.—A hawser whose other end was fast aboard a big blue-funneled freighter that was just poking her nose out of her narrow slip next the warehouses.

Here was almost a complete port in itself. Piers, warehouses, the Blue Streak oil refinery—all the massed buildings and business that made up the vast corporation of the Peter Blue millions.

But Brodie had no eye for piers and buildings. All he had an eye for was that blue-stacked tug, though he did faintly

observe the big freighter just slipping from her berth. Another old acquaintance, that—the *Merchant Queen*, that had done the dirty work that day with the Swede tramp's tow.

"Give her all you got, Red!" yelled Brodie down the water main. "And stand by for collision!"

And he swung the *Maude's* sharp bow straight for the *Spray's* engine-room, completely ignoring an odd, muffled rumble that had seemingly come from the *Merchant Queen's* vitals.

In that momentous instant, though, Brodie was sure he had been seen. Not only seen, but recognized. For suddenly Bull Blanton popped out of the *Spray's* wheelhouse, ran aft yelling. His hands held an axe. It flashed, fell. And the hawser to the *Merchant Queen*, chopped completely asunder, whipped in air and then fell into the current with a splash. Freed of all holds, the *Spray* jerked, shot ahead, and then went away from there at rocking speed.

Foiled, Brodie, could only jerk the engine-room bell and swear. "The dirty buzzard!" he yelped. "He's cut loose!" And then his mouth suddenly dropped open—and stayed open.

From the bow of the *Merchant Queen* men were raining down. Not sliding, but jumping! Jumping, splashing, and then coming up to swim away with backward glances as if the devil himself were at their heels.

At the same time Brodie realized dazedly that dense clouds of black were pouring out of the *Merchant Queen!* Not out of her funnels, but from companionways, engine-room gratings. And with the smoke came licking flames.

"Holy Cow!" gasped Tommy Shaw. "She's afire!"

"Afire?" Brodie suddenly snapped to motion. "That ain't all! They've quit her—they've abandoned her! And she's burning, right at the piers!"

That fact had undoubtedly become apparent ashore, too. Whistles were bellowing, sirens screaming, men were running frantically. But they were not running, firehose in hand, toward the piers. They were fleeing empty-handed in any direction but that.

But Bill Brodie had no thought for that odd circumstance just then.

"Tommy!" he yelled. "Get back there with a boat-hook! And when I put you alongside that hawser end, you fish it in! And then you bend it to our own hawser. Bend it to stay, damn it!"

Tommy gaped. And then, dropping the wheel, he raced down and aft.

Navy Bill Brodie spun the wheel, kicked the *Maude* around. From aft, a moment later, came Tommy's exultant yell. And then, another moment later, "I've got her fast! Take her away!"

Puffing and churning, the *Maude* took a strain, and then slowly began to haul the smoking *Merchant Queen* out and away from the threatened piers. Out into the stream itself. And grinning, Brodie rang up four bells and a jingle for full speed ahead.

Tommy Shaw came tumbling back into the wheelhouse. "It's a—short tow!" he gasped. "Only fifty feet of her hawser, and what little's left of ours!"

"What's the difference? It's plenty!" Navy Bill chuckled. "Plenty to bring us the shekels. Salvage, my boy, salvage!"

"Salvage?" Tommy gaped. "That tub 'ull burn to the water-line! She's afire plumb to the guts already! There won't be nothing left to salvage!"

"Not ship salvage. Piers—warehouses—that oil refinery!" Brodie himself was afire with his grand idea. "They'd all have burned if we hadn't yanked her away! We'll get plenty salvage, or I'm no sea-lawyer!"

JUST then the first fire-tug put in its appearance. But, cutting close to the Blue Funnel piers, it suddenly swerved in and alongside to pick up a howling, waving man from the *Merchant Queen's*

dock. And then it did what no other fire-tug had ever done in all Navy Bill's experience. Instead of heading straight for the fire, it veered wildly to port, shot past well clear, and then raced on ahead down the channel, its frantic whistle screaming at every jump.

"Why, the dirty, smoke-eating — !" Bill Brodie snarled, and then gave a sudden grunt of pleased satisfaction. "I know! He's going ahead to clear the channel. Looks like for once we're going to have plenty right of way!"

The right of way was undoubtedly theirs. As the fire-tug with shrieking whistle raced ahead, ferries, incoming ships, all manner of craft, broke from the channel and dashed for the shore with all speed. Like a broad avenue the whole river seemed to open up for the passage of the *Maude* and her tow.

Red Peters deserted his engine below to pop up into the wheelhouse. "What's all the whooping about?" And then he glanced aft to the wallowing volcano dragging less than a hundred yards astern, and gulped. "Sufferin' polecats!"

"Not polecats. Salvage! And offa old Peter Blue himself!" grinned Brodie.

Red Peters gave a grunt. "An oil-fire, or I never saw one. Fuel pumps—fireroom pressure tanks, maybe. But if it hits her main fuel tanks, Big Boy, you're going to wish that hawser there was a whole lot longer!"

"What of it? You don't pick up salvage without some risk . . . There's that fire-tug again. What does she want now?"

The fire-tug had slowed, turned around to parallel them, but she still kept her distance. Another rumbling explosion astern and a leaping geyser of smoke had given evidence that other fuel had been reached by the flames gnawing at the *Merchant Queen*.

But aboard the fire-boat men were gesticulating wildly. A megaphone appeared. Somebody bellowed wildly across the intervening distance.

"Aboard the tug there! Lengthen your tow! Veer out your hawser! But for God's sake don't let go!"

"Can't! Ain't got no more hawser! We got out all we got now!" yelled Brodie. "But it ought to be enough. What's the matter?"

"Matter?" yelled the megaphone "Gasoline—ammunition—shells! That's what's the matter! Don't you know that ship's loaded with them?"

Brodie gaped, turned staring eyes toward the flaming craft astern. "What —How—?"

"Smuggled cargo! A man on the pier told us! Smuggling to Italy—to beat the President's embargo! Hold on—as long as you can!"

Red Peters' eyes were bulging. "If that fire hits that ammunition and stuff —good night! This ain't just a T-N-T truck! It's a T-N-T truck with the fuse all lit! And we're setting in the driver's seat!"

Bill Brodie's eyes too had bulged at that astounding news from the megaphone. But now they narrowed.

"Looks like our salvage has turned out to be a bear, and we got her by the tail! If that stuff goes off, there won't be enough left of us to make hash out of." His face was white and his lips tight. "You and Tommy get the hell off here! Get off! Jump!"

"You jumpin'?" Red Peters' voice was short, almost ugly.

"I can't jump! Somebody's got to stick to this tow. It'd blow up half the waterfront if it got adrift here! But there's no sense in you and Tommy—"

"Then shut up about jumpin'!" Red Peters gave a snarl. "I ain't got time to do no jumpin' anyway. I got engines to tend to!" And with another snarl and a snort he was stumping below.

Tommy's hands were squeezing the wheel so tight that they were bloodless. But when Brodie looked at him he only shook his head.

THAT journey down the upper bay was one to be everlastingy recorded in the log of Brodie's memory.

It was wider here, most of the sea traffic behind or well to the side. But the din of the sirens was continuous. Especially when the Narrows brought the shores with their clustered houses close down on either side again.

Other fast tugs, even speed-boats, had joined the first fire-tug now, all racing ahead with screaming whistles.

With white lips Brodie glanced back along that all too short hawser to the smoking volcano astern. So far the *Merchant Queen's* bulkheads, probably already red-hot, had held. But when they did let go—

Brodie remembered the countless deaths and terrible destruction of the Black Tom explosion.

Yard by yard the Narrows slipped past, began to open out into the lower bay. Brodie gave a sigh of relief as the last crowded point drew abreast, then dropped astern.

And then Brodie left the main channel, began to sweep in parallel to the beach. His straining eyes, bloodshot in his twisted face, began to search, search. He was looking anxiously for some stretch of beach less settled, more isolated, than the rest.

And then his eyes lightened.

There, jutting out just ahead, was a mile-long, almost deserted point. It was wooded, parklike. Only one huge, boarded-up mansion with its garages and outbuildings showed amid that mile of green. Even as Brodie looked, a lone car shot out from the caretaker's cottage and dashed up the hill and to safety.

"And they say there ain't no Santa Claus!"

Captain Brodie stepped to the wheel, jerked it out of Tommy Shaw's hands. "Grab that axe and go aft. When I yell 'Cut', you cut! Aud cut to beat hell!"

Like a man standing on the verge of a roaring volcano he was suddenly aware of his infinite loneliness. Steamers, traffic of all sorts, had cleared the way for at least a mile. A deserted mile in which appeared only the *Maude*, the *Merchant Queen* and that green isolated point there ahead. Even the fire-tugs and speedboats had abandoned them now, to swing out and join that watching fleet.

Slowly, all too slowly, the house-crowned point neared. A thousand yards —five hundred—now only two hundred.

"Cut!"

TOMMY Shaw raised the ax, brought it down. The severed hawser cracked like a whip, leaped high in air. And the next moment Brodie had spun the *Maude* and was racing away, leaving the burning *Merchant Queen* to slide slowly on and come at last to a grating stop just off the ornate boathouse on the end of the point.

For two minutes — three — she lay there smoking, while the *Maude* made her mad dash for safety. Then, just as Tommy tumbled back into the wheelhouse, it came.

Before Brodie's back-glancing eyes the burning ship seemed fairly to raise itself out of the water. Then in mid-air it disintegrated. Disintegrated in a burst of flame and smoke and bomb-shell fire.

Bill Brodie dropped the wheel and hurled himself to the floor alongside Tommy Shaw, who was already striving to dig himself into the very planking.

The next moment the *Maude* too seemed lifted out of the water by some giant hand. Lifted and shaken till she squealed in torment.

The wheelhouse windows bulged and fell outward. The deck buckled. Searchlights, binoculars and other gear broke from their moorings and flew about the place. There was a crash—the *Maude's* smokestack going by the board. A vast and mighty roaring filled the air, and then the thud of descending fragments,

like a rain of anvils, on wheelhouse, deck, everywhere. Thunder beat and hammered at their ears. Thunder amid which the *Maude* rose on end, rolled, pitched, and all but capsized, as mighty combers beat over her.

Out of the wreckage at last, Captain Brodie rolled over, felt himself dazedly, and then sat up. Tommy Shaw was likewise showing life. Then a moment later heavy feet scrambled at the remnants of the ladder, and Red Peters hove in sight. Red Peters' whole face and neck were covered with oil and grease.

"Wasn't no use—staying below," he grunted dizzily. "The engine won't *run*. Every damn piston-rod is bowlegged as hell." He clutched a bent stanchion and clung there weakly.

Captain Brodie gave a sigh of relief, glanced out of what had once been the Maude's wheelhouse windows.

Only a vast cloud of smoke and a mass of floating debris showed where the *Merchant Queen* had lately been. But on the point ashore there was little more to be seen. Twisted planks, scattered stone, piles of dismantled brick—that was all there was.

Red Peters gave one look.

"Gone—all gone!" He spat a dejected mouthful of oil and grease. "Just wait till old Peter Blue sees us now!"

"Sees *us*?" Brodie gave a yelp. "Wait till we see *him!* And we're taking a lawyer with us when we go!"

IN his ornate offices in the Blue Seal Export Company, old Peter Blue beat his mahogany desk and glared at the three who stood facing him.

"Salvage? Try and get it! All you salvaged was the *Merchant Queen*. And the *Merchant Queen* was incorporated separately! All you can win in a suit is up to the value of the *Merchant Queen* and its corporation. So if you think you can get anything out of her now—sue and be damned!"

Captain Bill Brodie glanced at Red Peters, and then nodded to the quiet man with the square jaw who stood beyond. "All right, feller, you tell him."

The square-jawed man stepped forward.

"You are mistaking our claim, Mr. Blue. It isn't just the *Merchant Queen* we are interested in. But we have photographs here showing what took place within five hundred yards radius from the point where the *Merchant Queen* blew up. Practically everything within that radius was blown to bits. We have also photographs of the Blue Seal Export Company, the Blue Streak Oil Refinery, the Blue Funnel warehouses and piers—everything within a similar five hundred yard radius of the pier where the *Merchant Queen,* abandoned by its crew, would have been if my clients at risk of their lives had not hauled her out and clear. We are suing, Mr. Blue, not only for the value of the *Maude,* but for an equitable ratio of the value of the Blue Seal Export Company, the Blue Streak Oil Refinery, the Blue Funnel warehouses and piers—everything you own, in fact! And if you try to shift the claim onto the insurance underwriters, we'll sue the Blue Casualty and Marine Insurance Company, which, we find, wrote the insurance! Now if you think you can duck that claim—go to it!"

Peter Blue gasped, gurgled, and then whirled on Red Peters, who was nearest. "Why you thief—you robber—!"

It was a mistake. Red Peters' face was hard, but his fist was harder. "Robber, is it?" Red Peters' fist landed solidly on the shipping magnate's beaklike nose, flattening it all over its immediate background. Then Red Peters grinned.

"Five hundred dollars worth of assault and battery. I'm admitting it. But I've been waiting a whole year for this. It's worth it. You can deduct it from my share of the salvage!"

"Red!" Captain Brodie's tones were

admonishing. "Don't you know you oughtn't bother a busy man like Mr. Blue? A man with all the troubles he's got—what with them deputy marshals out in front about them charges of smuggling shells and ammunition, falsifying invoices, not hoisting a danger flag over a ship carrying inflammables, and lots of other things like that. I'm ashamed of you! Come on out and have a drink!"

And with broad grins and high heads, Captain Bill Brodie and Chief Engineer Red Peters strode out and away, slamming the door noisily on Peter Blue, owner of the Blue Seal Export Company, the Blue Streak Oil Company, the Blue Funnel Shipping Company, and the Blue Stack Towing Company—and likewise owner of many, many troubles and a large headache.

Windies Is Bad Varmints

by Mody C. Boatright

"SO snakes kep' you awake," Red said to Lanky. "Well, that jest shows what a tenderfoot you be. If you'd just of put hair rope around your bed, them snakes wouldn't have come in."

"I read that," Lefty said, "but I didn't think it was true."

"True as gospel," said Red.

"How does it work?" asked Lanky.

"Tickles their bellies," replied Red. "A rattler jist can't stand ticklin'. One fall night we found we had bedded in a regular den of varmints. We made our beds right up techin' each other, and put hair ropes on the ground all around the whole outfit. The next mornin' we counted a hundred and twenty-nine rattlesnakes around the beds. They had jist naturally tickled their fool selves to death tryin' to crawl over the rope."

"Shore," Red yawned, "them critters is bad. Even when you cut their heads off, they kin bite an' it's still pizenous. I seen a man bit like that one time. . . ."

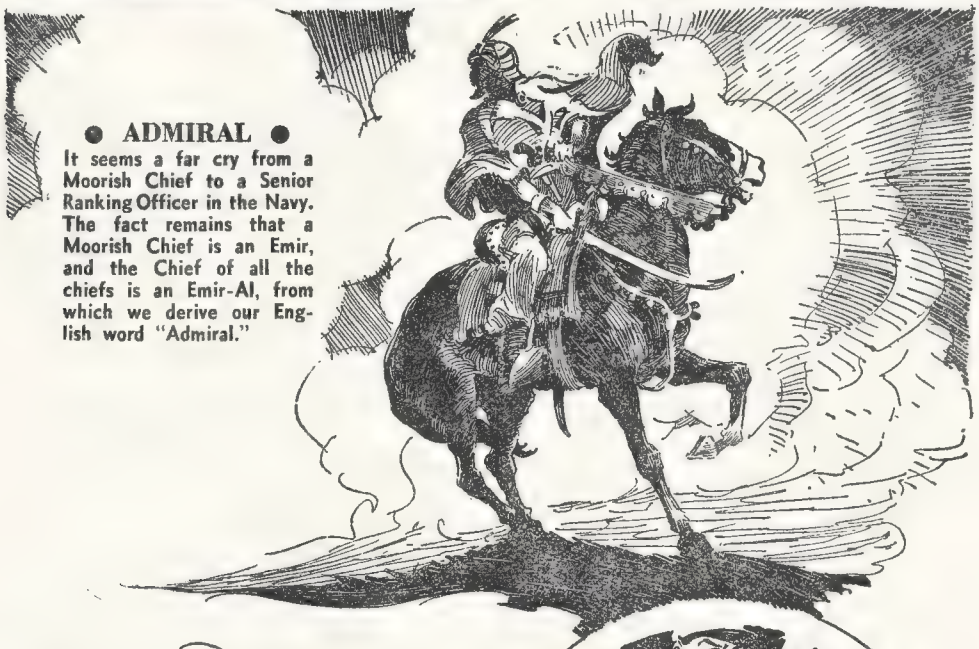
"And he never was right in his head again," said Hank.

"Which one of you was it?" asked Lanky.

From "Tall Tales From Texas Cow Camps."

TRADITIONS OF THE DEEPWATERMEN

by WINDAS



ADMIRAL

It seems a far cry from a Moorish Chief to a Senior Ranking Officer in the Navy. The fact remains that a Moorish Chief is an Emir, and the Chief of all the chiefs is an Emir-Al, from which we derive our English word "Admiral."

IN THE BRIG

Because Admiral Nelson assigned a small brig to carry prisoners taken in one of his famous victories, and the seamen in his fleet ever afterwards associated that ship with prisoners, the name "brig" has become a sailorman's slang-term for JAIL.

RED OIL FOR THE PORT LIGHT

A traditional joke that has been played on most every new and inexperienced boy during his first voyage. He would be sent to ask the mate for some RED OIL for the Port Light, or for GREEN OIL for the Starboard Light.

VIKING

The correct pronunciation of this word is VEEK-ing, as these sea-warriors derived their name from the WICKS (pronounced VEEKS), which were the bays or fjords on which they lived.

WINDAS 1936

. . . she tapped the sleeper lightly.

TRAPPED BY BLACK MAMBAS

by HUGH PRIOR

FOR sheer horror and agonizing suspense, the experience undergone one night not long ago by Mrs. James Cruickshank, wife of a Zululand planter, and South African born, would be hard to equal.

Mrs. Cruickshank was alone in the big parlor of the dwelling house, playing her violin. Her husband and her brother, the only other occupants of the house, had gone to their rooms, tired after a long day in the open.

The music filled the large room, and floated away on the still African night. If any other sound occurred in the parlor the player was unaware of it. But suddenly she noticed a shadow waving slowly, sinuously, across her music sheet. Still playing, she turned casually—to face a huge snake, which a single glance told her was a mamba. The reptile's head was on a level with her shoulder and the thick, black body, upreared on the tail, was weaving.

If her bow faltered, it was for no more than a second or two. Instinct, as well as her knowledge of the ways of the snake, warned her that if her music stopped, or if she made the slightest false move, the reptile would strike.

Mrs. Cruickshank knew that her life now hung on a thread, the tenuous thread of her music. She had time to think. Her first natural impulse to call

for help she stifled at once. The mere sound of her cry might break the holding spell of the melody and anger the mamba. And if her call should be heard, husband or brother might rush hastily into the room and unwittingly bring disaster.

Moving with the infinite caution of controlled terror, she turned round and faced the mamba. Then, inch by inch, she backed gently for a few feet and threw a swift, exploring glance about the room. The snake followed, never, so it seemed to her, lessening its distance from her by an inch.

The room was very large, extending, like the parlors of most South African farm dwellings, almost the entire length of the big house. It was moderately illuminated by a swinging oil lamp. There was a good deal of furniture, most of it of the massive, comfortable type. But there was plenty of open space.

Mrs. Cruickshank saw with dismay that the only open door, the door through which the snake had entered, was far away from the corner where she stood by the piano. To reach it she would have to weave backward, a long, tortuous way through what seemed now a wilderness of scattered pieces of furniture. She must take care to collide with nothing—above all to overturn nothing. And never for more than a second or two must her bow leave the strings.

Every backward step had to be carefully directed. That meant continual glances over either shoulder. Not sharp jerks of the head alone, but slow, deliberate turns of her body as well. For a sudden nervous movement of bow or violin might startle the snake into fury and cause the venemous head, a short two feet away, to stab forward and bury its fangs in arm or shoulder.

THE plan Mrs. Cruickshank finally formed was to lead the mamba to the open doorway. When she maneuvered the reptile into the right position there, she would make a desperate leap for safety. That leap could succeed only if she made it and a grasp of the door handle simultaneous. Then with luck, and no small amount of it, she might be able to swing the door shut with enough speed to bring it between the snake and herself. The mamba would then be shut in the room and could be disposed of by the men.

But if she failed, nothing on earth could be more certain than her death. Death from the bite of a mamba is terribly swift, a mere matter of minutes.

Around scattered tables, curving about big chairs that stood out in the squareness of careless comfort, by tall lamps that stood dark and vacant in the shadows, by flimsy little occasional tables whose fall, or that of one of the tall lamps, would be the signal for the end, the fantastic procession went on, toward that distant door.

And then—the first snag. The woman, guided by her frequent backward glances, had only the shadowy light of the oil lamp to help her. Behind her the end of a long couch protruded angularly from one of the dimmer spaces. She glided slowly down its length—down until she reached its end. And there she and the following mamba were trapped.

She had blundered into a blind alley. For the couch held her in the sharp angle it made with a table. And even had she been able, she dared make no attempt to move the table.

It was a bad moment. To round the couch's end and resume her journey she had to travel back its entire length. That meant retracing her steps and advancing. And going forward meant walking straight into the waving mamba.

Would it retreat before her? Would the violin's throb send it backward as it had led it forward? She had to take the risk.

The mamba responded. To the woman's tentative forward step the snake

retreated—a little and uncertainly. She tried to make her violin speak to it. She enveloped it in louder sound.

Once on the move, the upreared reptile showed no disposition to bar the woman's path. With her music she had virtually to push the mamba back at least eight feet. And every inch of that distance she had to traverse with infinite care. A stumble, a step taken too abruptly, and the mamba, possibly mistaking such a movement for attack, might strike. There could be no avoiding at close quarters the lightning stab of that head.

Woman and snake were at last past the end of the couch, and Mrs. Cruickshank resumed her backward step, wove on through the haphazard maze of furiture to the distant door.

She reached the door at last. The supreme test now faced the harassed woman. The dropping of the quivering bow, the seizing of the door handle, the swift jump, the swing of the door that would say whether the fangs would miss a white outstretched arm, or sink into it and end her life.

The woman, keyed to breaking point, stepped gently back, back, until a convulsive shudder shot through her. She halted instantly. Her bow shot, sharply whining, across a string, then trailed discordantly back.

Her shoulder had touched a cold body. It was another mamba, the mate of the thing she had so long kept dancing to the feverish activity of her bow. It was only by an effort that brought a low, anguished moan from her that she compelled her half-paralyzed arm to resume its bowing.

EITHER she was made of stuff rarely put into woman, or, the rock bottom of horror having been reached, fear was swept out of her. After that brief failure her bow resumed its rhythmic motions. Slowly she turned, so that the undulating body of a mamba was at either shoulder. A new and recklessly bold plan had flashed into her brain.

She was going back into the room. She was going to thread once more the maze that wound about the scattered furniture, and led back to the big open space in the corner where the piano stood. That is, if she could lure the snakes together, so that they would follow her side by side.

That long, nightmare journey was necessary if she would again stand between snake and door. For only in the comparatively vacant corner was there room to make a wide, gradual turn that would not jar the hypnotized mambas.

The woman was battling physical exhaustion. Worse, she was enduring all the nerve strain of a prisoner awaiting the executioner. For there was little hope indeed that she could escape alive.

She backed in as wide a curve as the space by the door allowed. The mambas followed her.

Mrs. Cruickshank reached the corner at last. As she had calculated, there was no difficulty in turning there. With quickened backward step she led the waving snakes round in a wide arc, until her back was again toward the distant door.

Then began the third journey across the room. This time she carefully avoided the blind alley which had caught her before. But she quickened her pace a little too soon. The mambas slithered hastily after her. The undulating body of one brushed against a floor lamp. It tilted, swayed back, rocked drunkenly for several seconds, then settled on its base again.

The shock was so great that her playing stopped. It was only when the mambas had almost ceased their swaying that she took warning, and hastily resumed her music. She saw to it that no further accident of that nature occurred for the rest of the journey.

Again she reached the door. She came

to a standstill and, slowing her music to hold the mambas anchored, turned her head for a careful survey of her position. But one glance was enough. With a lurch of her heart she saw that her plan could not be carried out. The big door was flat against the wall. To shut it would necessitate bringing it forward in a wide arc. And the snakes were only two feet from her. She could not possibly shut that door quickly enough.

The seemingly doomed woman stood there and played on, trying to think.

Behind her yawned the big oblong of black. The door led to a kind of semi-corridor. It was really a veranda, but almost entirely closed in. It ran the full length of the house, and led at each end to a rondavel, that is, a round room, structures commonly attached to South African farm houses. The rondavels were not actually parts of the house, but were connected with it by the veranda.

One of the rondavels was her brother's bedroom. But by then he would be asleep, and his door shut. Halfway along the veranda was the bedroom to which her husband had retired. Was he asleep too? Probably.

What was she to do? She would collapse eventually. But she soon found that even had she had the physical strength she could not stand still. A hysterical desire to be moving was creeping over her.

Scarcely knowing what she was doing, and with no kind of plan, with nothing but a feeble hope that her sleeping husband would somehow come to her rescue, she backed through the door, followed by the mambas. As she did so, she reflected that if her husband did come out when the grim procession passed his door, his coming might rouse them to fury, and let loose their venom at either him or her, or both.

The veranda was in utter blackness. Instinctively she turned in the direction of her brother's rondavel. As she did so she glanced over her shoulder, and a sudden wave of hope swept through her. The door of her brother's room was open, and his lamp was burning. She remembered that it was a habit of his to read in bed for a while before going to sleep. He was awake, then. Her best chance of escape was to lead her grisly companions to his room. He would not be taken unawares, for her playing in that odd place at the time of night would at least arouse his curiosity.

Now, instead of hoping, she feared that her husband would come out as she passed. Praying that he was asleep, she began the journey along the veranda.

Bad as her journey across the lighted room had been, backing along that inky tunnel was infinitely worse. Fortunately, she knew there were only two or three chairs on it, and they were always pushed back against the wall to ensure a clear passage at night.

A few feet from her brother's room she raised the volume of her music. Why did he not call to her? Surely, her presence on the veranda, at that late hour, playing her violin, was strange enough to cause an investigation. Her husband had made none, but his door was shut and no trace of light was showing.

Inside her brother's room she looked quickly and fearfully at the bed. Her brother was there—but he was sound asleep! The book he had been reading was lying on his breast, where it had dropped from his hand.

SHE had to keep moving. Luckily, there was little furniture in the way to impede her progress. Luckily, too, the head of the bed was two or three feet from the wall. (In Africa beds do not usually touch walls. That precaution makes it difficult for small vermin to climb into them.) So she began to circle the bed, playing now softly, now loudly, hoping to wake the sleeper.

Finally, since there was no other way,

as she passed along the side of the bed she took her bow from the strings and tapped the sleeper lightly with it. The touch of the bow had to be light, for a sudden, startled awakening held dire possibilities.

Still she could not rouse him. And since there was nothing else that she could do, she kept up the dreadful parade around the bed, and hoped.

In the room off the corridor the husband lay drowsing. He had heard his wife playing in the parlor. That was nothing unusual. But there was something unusual in the strange continuity of her playing. He wondered dimly at that, as he hovered on the edge of sleep.

He must have drifted over the edge, for when he again found himself listening to the music, it seemed to him to come from the other side of the house. The thought brought full wakefulness. He sat up, listening.

The strains of the violin, sure enough, were coming from the rondavel where his wife's brother was sleeping. But the playing was his wife's. Something strange there. He jumped from the bed, quietly opened the door and stepped into the corridor.

The light caught his eye. With the instinctive caution of the man who had lived all his life in Africa, he approached the door noiselessly. When his startled eye fell on the dreadful procession he was thankful for the caution he had exercised.

Then he slipped away again, to return quickly with a double-barrelled shotgun.

And he saw that the task before him was no easy one. Those two mambas had to be killed with one shot.

The only time the two heads were in line with his barrels was when they had passed the door and were beginning to curve around the foot of the bed. He crouched down, leveled his gun, and waited.

His wife slowly backed into view, and after her the slithering reptiles. The heads did not come into line. Another wait. After his first look he did not dare to look again at the face of his wife. He needed a steady hand.

Six times the ghastly procession passed the door, and he had never a chance to fire. But the seventh time the two heads waved as one.

The gun roared out, both barrels. A storm of shot tore across the room, literally shearing off the heads of the two reptiles.

His wife collapsed in a dead faint.

THE CAMP-FIRE

where readers, writers and adventurers meet.

MANY old comrades will remember about the founding of the earlier American Legion by Arthur Sullivant Hoffman in 1914 and 1915, but they'll be glad to read his own account of those exciting days as he wrote it for the July, 1934, issue of the *American Legion Monthly*. Much of that article is reprinted here by permission of the editor, John T. Winterich. To many other readers, all of this matter will be new.

Harry C. Laird, of Woodville, Ohio, raises the question to which this article is the best answer. He'll learn also why we can't tell him whether his number was 45 or 54—the Marines got those records.

And this seems a good place to answer the friendly inquiries which come in now and again as to the whereabouts of A. S. H. He lives at Carmel, New York, where in his own study he has written several sound and valuable books on the writing of fiction, where he has now begun a book of reminiscences of his editorial career, and where he acts in an advisory capacity to a number of prominent writers.

Mr. Laird wrote us this letter:

For many years, following the late war, I have had argument after argument about the origin of the American Legion. I even wrote to Fred Haskell at Washington and asked him, but begged him not to tell me that the Legion was organized in Paris after the Armistice, because that was not the right answer. However, in spite of my contention, he advised me that Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., and one or two others did organize the American Legion in Paris.

I say that the Legion was organized by young Roosevelt's father, the late Ex-President, in the year 1910 or 1911. The qualifications were, at that time, that a man be an ex-soldier. Upon payment of 25 cents, a card, numbered, was issued to the member together with a lapel button in the form of a target, in the red white and blue rings. I was a regularly enrolled member with the number either 45 or 54.

I contend too, that when the first officers' Training Camp was established at Plattsburg Barracks, N. Y., the list of eligibles was taken from the roster of the original American Legion, rather than from the rolls of the War Department. This roster was turned over to the War Department by Theodore Roosevelt.

Lately, I have been informed that you might have the right information on hand and that you also might have the original first hundred members, or so; if this is right, will you please advise me if my information is correct and if my number is right?

HERE is Mr. Hoffman's own account of what really happened in the formation of that older "American Legion."

The American Legion's grandfather was born in Costa Rica, Central America, in the early summer of 1914, before the outbreak of the World War. He was, as a matter of fact, still-born, but he managed to leave behind him a son who passed the name on to the most famous member of the family.

Before explaining this rather stiff statement, the Legion's genealogy should be out-

lined in full. An excellent article by William S. Vawter on the "four American Legions" in the *Kansas Legionnaire* of December, 1927, tells of the first organization to bear the name—the American Legion of Honor, organized December 18, 1878, whose supreme council was incorporated the following year in Massachusetts. But its purpose was fraternal only, and it died in its twenties. Turning to a collateral branch of the family, the 97th Overseas Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, known also as The American Legion, needs no introduction.

But returning to Costa Rica a young American E. D. Cooke wrote a letter from Port Limon to a New York magazine, *Adventure*, whose "Camp-Fire" department was a clearing-house for all those who at one time or another had felt the world was "for to admire and for to see" and had acted accordingly. He made this suggestion:

"The other suggestion is based on my belief that in ten years or less time the U. S. is going to find herself in a man-sized fight. I vote that all of us who are drifting around, and who would ordinarily volunteer to fight for our country, begin to form some sort of a volunteer organization now through *Adventure*. Then, if something turns up, we can all get together and volunteer in a body. And the fellows who have fought with and against each other in some of the Spigotty wars will go in together, knowing that every one in the outfit can obey orders and handle a gun. Personally, when I get into a scrap, I like to know that the fellows with me are not going to go up in the air when they get in a tight place."

Later Cooke came to that magazine's office to see me, I being its editor, but that was four years later. He was then a first lieutenant of infantry in New York on a brief mission from France, and a fine upstanding officer he was. We had become friends and occasionally I heard from him at the front—a German five-mark note lies before me, inscribed "Bois de Belleau, June 11/18." But I have not heard from him since.

That letter from Port Limon interested me, for I too smelled war ahead and our unpreparedness stunk. It must have been June or early July, 1914, when the letter came, but magazines are made up considerably ahead of time and the November issue, appearing in October, 1914, was the earliest into which I could put Cooke's suggestion of what amounted to another "rough rider" regiment. To his argument of safe company was added the better chance of getting to the front quickly, the skeleton militia of the day was likely to have trouble filling out its cavalry, field artillery, engineer and sanitary complements, so special units, as well as one or more infantry regiments, were suggested for what I christened the "Legion." The name had begun to hatch; also the idea of specialization.

The magazine was to act as clearing-house and October brought prompt replies. One reader suggested a medical unit; one sent me the form used by the British Legion of Frontiersmen, suggesting surveyor, flying and other units. The specialization grew in my mind; modern warfare was developing it to a degree thitherto unknown. Investigation bared appalling facts. The United States Army and Navy did not even have any record of men honorably discharged from the regular services—no knowledge of their addresses, not even a list of their names. And these, with a standing army of less than 100,000, were our only thoroughly trained front-line troops and naval reserve—thoroughly trained, that is, by the standards existing in this country before the World War.

As to any specialization beyond the actual enlisted personnel, the Government did not even have a list of the trades and professions necessary to the modern war-machine. Even after Europe had been aflame for months and when there was already question of whether we should be drawn into it! It is incredible but it is true.

So I, a layman, a private citizen, with no more knowledge than the average man in the street, set about making such a list, with no sources of information except the general war news and such common sense as I could muster. Funny, isn't it? Yes and tragic. But even a layman, once he gave his attention to it, could see that here was involved a tremendous and complex nation-wide machinery. Help, quite clearly, was needed—some very quickly. Most of all, help to get still more help in endless amount—for it might be a life-and-death matter.

Dr. John E. Hausmann, who had served in the Medical Corps of the Volunteer Army, responded to my plea as follows—he resigned his position as chemist to a corporation in order to give all his time, heart and brain to this work. He and I elected him acting secretary. By this time it was January, 1915, and we had progressed to this stage: We had a few pages in a popular fiction magazine as headquarters, clearing-house and sole means of publicity; some applications for membership, enthusiastic but a mere handful; an acting secretary, serving without pay; an incomplete list of trades and professions; and I had enlarged the name from "Legion" to "American Legion." Plus faith—faith that

at this distance I find difficult to distinguish from impudence.

Anyhow, we had our heads down and were bucking the line as solemnly and confidently as if we had only a couple of other fellows in front of us. All we were trying to do was to establish an unofficial United States Reserve of fighting men and of the men needed with and behind them.

Dr. Hausmann had, I believe, served under General Wood; with no other semblance of pull or introduction I wrote to Major General Leonard Wood at Governors Island enclosing our plans and our list. There came a cordial reply and February 12, 1915, we took the ferry to the headquarters of the Department of the East for a personal interview. There were present several of his staff —Captain Gordon Johnston, Captain Dorey and then or later Captain Charles E. Kilbourne—of the highest type, all of them. [Colonel Johnston, as he had since been promoted, died on March 9th, 1934.]

And perhaps it has no place in this article, but anywhere, any time, the name of General Leonard Wood comes up I stop in my tracks to salute the finest type of man and American I have known, never so much man and so splendid an American as when the victim of petty and bitter injustice.

We departed with our hearts singing. No official help or endorsement could be given us, but we had been told our plan was "the most practical step yet taken for Defense," that our tremulous list was a good one, and that Captain Johnston and others of the staff would give what advice they could. They did! So, very shortly afterward, did the late Commander R. K. Crank of the Navy and Captain Frank E. Evans of the Marine Corps. Capt. Johnston became the main dynamo in getting things done and bringing the Legion into practical being.

Thanks to General Wood's personal influence we had a personal interview with Theodore Roosevelt a week later and soon thereafter received his letter of endorsement for publication. The American Legion idea had begun getting help in earnest; men of influence put their shoulders to the wheel. My own life became a mad orgy of getting the general prospectus into final shape and preparing dope for the papers besides trying to hold down a regular job and have the grippe. Late in the afternoon of February 26th Dr. Hausmann, Captain Johnston and I gave out said dope at the Barge Office down at the Battery, releasing it for March 1, 1915.

March first the news of the Legion's launching occupied the front page from coast to coast. Defense was becoming a national issue and our Council carried the names of Theodore Roosevelt, Elihu Root, three ex-Secretaries of War, Jacob M. Dickinson, Henry L. Stimson and Luke E. Wright; two ex-Secretaries of the Navy, Truman H. Newberry and George von L. Meyer. Later were added a second ex-President, William H. Taft, and another ex-Secretary of the Navy, Charles J. Bonaparte.

So much for the outward showing. At this time the Legion, in actual fact, consisted of the outfit already mentioned, an unequipped office just secured, our list of trades and occupations extended to cover some seventy or eighty classifications, a total membership (by mail, through *Adventure*) of 300 or 400. Plus influential endorsers and the nucleus of an organization.

The offices at 10 Bridge Street were at once swamped, not only with applications, applicants and reporters, but with people of all kinds who offered their services free to help handle the work. The pacifists went wild in the other direction. Bishop Greer attacked General Wood, who had courageously given his personal, not his official endorsement; boomed our publicity greatly, and finally was forced to retract publicly. Promptly on the second day the War Department started an inquiry into General Wood's connection with the Legion. More publicity but it was the first move in the relentless campaign against this effort to get for the people what the administration itself refused to get them —some least elementary measure of National Defense.

Note the harmlessness of the organization the pacifists hailed as a menace. It merely registered the man-resources needed in case of war carefully classified and cross-indexed. The only obligations were to inform the secretary of change of address, to pay twenty-five cents a year and to serve the Government at need. No drill, no arming, no assemblage, no organization into units. (The "rough rider" idea had been dropped entirely.) It created nothing. It merely made instantly available to the Government resources already existing; merely did, beforehand, what the Government itself would have to do after a declaration of war.

Besides its Council the organization included five directors, a secretary, a treasurer and several hundred voting Advisory Members distributed among all the States. It issued certificates of enrolment and a button, a red circle enclosing a blue star on a white field. Incorporation under the laws of New York was granted March 4, 1915, after delay by a technicality, Julien T. Da-

vies, Jr., Arthur S. Hoffman, E. Ormonde Power, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Alexander M. White, incorporators.

From the perspective of the present the Legion's program seems entirely innocuous. Newspaper files of the day show that it bred a small national riot. "Teddy" was promptly and loudly accused of raising a division to lead to the front. Politics made the issue its own. The pacifists were anything but pacific toward the Legion. It was suspected of this and of that. Meanwhile it grew steadily; the papers spoke of an ultimate enrolment of up to 500,000.

But from the first, the Wilson Administration had been out to kill. Secretary of War Garrison's "rebuke" of General Wood had been mild enough—we felt that the Secretary had acted unwillingly under pressure from above. But it called off those of General Wood's staff who had been so ably helping. I saw Commander Crank open the wire from Secretary of the Navy Daniels that crisply ordered him off the scene. Captain Evans of the Marines vanished perforce. Certainly there was no encouragement or assistance or even forbearance from the Administration for those who were doing for it a common-sense thing it should itself have done long before. On the contrary, it became clear that it would not even accept the results of the Legion's work.

Certain of the directors decided it was a losing battle. It was through them or their friends that such small financial aid as the Legion needed for running expenses was secured. More important, for money could have been raised, withdrawal and admission of defeat by any part of the directorate would have been a serious blow to publicity. I still think the battle could have been fought and won, but after the initial work of launching I had been neatly relegated to the job of listening to the echoes of my own protesting voice.

The usual internal dissension, the main issue being publicity methods. The majority of the board were for the cold and distant methods of the banks and Wall Street of the day. Admitting the absolute need of dignity, it seemed to me that our appeal for members was essentially a human appeal if ever there was one and that we could go farthest by using it. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., held the same general view. We were a minority.

Dissatisfaction with the cold, ultra-conservative banking methods grew up among the Advisory Members throughout the country and at the first signs of retreat they made themselves heard. But to attack after a retreat has been sounded is not so easy. At a meeting in New York, May 21, 1915, Power was dropped from the presidency, but White succeeded him. Davies, because of ill health, had resigned from the board and Roy D. Jones of Boston, vigorous and enthusiastic, became vice-president. Dr. Hausmann was made a director, continuing as secretary. Nelson Lloyd succeeded Henry Rogers Winthrop as treasurer and both were made directors. C. H. Frost, Frederick Trevor Hill, William T. Hornaday, Samuel Wesley Long, Regis Henri Post, Courtland Smith and Henry Collins Walsh were added to the directors.

But the toboggan had already started down hill. The tremendous initial burst of publicity had not been followed up as it should have been; enrolment continued but the big chance was gone. Funds were low and there was constant pressure from within to drop the attempt on the ground that Government sanction and assistance were necessary.

But drop it where? For something like a year and a half, that was the question. The Government refused even to accept the Legion's carefully classified and cross-indexed records of the nearly 24,000 men it had enrolled. To save them, after the Legion had finally ceased to operate, I made room at *Adventure's* offices, for the huge wooden packing-cases containing them. And so the American Legion came home again.

There the records stayed while further attempts were made to get the War Department to accept, if only in storage, records that would be of indisputable value to that Department in case there should be one of those wars for which said Department was supposed to exist. There was, during 1915 and 1916, if you will remember, quite a possibility that we might encounter one of those wars.

Finally events proved too much for even the Wilson Administration and among other things, there came into being the Council for National Defense. Here was a chance for the Legion and a graceful chance for Secretary Baker to pursue a logical course. In December, 1916, nearly two years after the Legion was born, with solemn politeness on both sides, it was finally arranged that the Legion records should be turned over to the Council for National Defense.

So someone came and carted away the packing-cases that had been gathering dust in the back corners of the quarters of a popular fiction magazine. That is, all the card-indexes and classified files were taken away. There were several cases containing

only the original applications of members, mostly hand-written, from which the indexing and classifying had been done. These, being too much in the raw state, were not wanted and I hung on to them.

There is an aftermath. It seems we did get into a war after all. And if you will look the matter up you will find that there was a little hurry and even some confusion when it came to getting ready to do something about it after we had declared that we were at war. Only for a year or so, however, for by that time we almost had a modern army in the field though I've heard veterans say that if we had been prepared in advance it might have been a bit more convenient and satisfactory for the men at the front in this detail or in that—clothing, food, general equipment, trained officers, smoothness of organization and such.

Well, during that slight hurry and confusion, the only direct look-ins I had on the part played by those records of the defunct American Legion are these: First, a friend who had served in the personnel bureau or whatever at Washington told me that at one time there were three or four different Bureaus working on the duplicate sets of Legion records, while several more Bureaus stood in line waiting, not having anything else to work on. Second, one day Captain Evans called me up to ask whether there were still any of the Legion records at my office. I told him only the raw material. "Fine," said he. "A truck'll be down there in a few minutes." It was, with some husky Marines on board, and I said my final goodbye to that other American Legion when they hustled those remaining packing-cases on to the freight-elevator.

As to the name? The old American Legion being still legally in existence, a formality was necessary. In May, 1919 I was one of the five incorporators who gladly gave written consent to the transfer of the name to the present American Legion. I believe the old Legion has since been legally disincorporated.

But there was a pleasant sequel. In June, 1920, came a letter from Dr. Richard Derby, of Oyster Bay, enclosing copy of a letter of May 5th from Lemuel Bolles, National Adjutant of the Legion, stating that at their last meeting the National Executive Committee had authorized a committee of three to convey to me the thanks and appreciation of The American Legion for permission to use the name. A courtesy much valued by me—the more so because I thought I sensed the hand of someone, possibly Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., who was familiar with the history of the old Legion and knew that, however little I was responsible for what practical success it attained, there had been a period when most of its birth-pangs were supplied by me.

* * * * *

As a closing thought, just how much of that old Legion's work is being done in the United States today with the world again nervous on the edge of war? And what could The American Legion do about it?

Herbert Patrick Lee, author, newspaperman, and Ask Adventure expert on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and on Ellesmere Land, Baffinland and other remote Arctic sections, died on November 11, 1936, at the age of thirty-seven. He was born in Nottingham, England, a doctor's son.

Pat Lee was a member of the staff of *The New York Sun*. After a night reporting assignment in Long Island City, he left to reach a street car for his home at Great Neck. The assignment had been at a warehouse, in a railroad yards section filled with storage buildings, spurs and sidings. Apparently he walked around the end of a string of freight cars just as it backed. He was struck, and a switchman heard his cries.

In the hospital he said to his wife, "I'll be all right. You take care of yourself. I'm all right."

Oxygen and blood transfusions failed, and he died within a few hours.

When sixteen, Herbert Patrick Lee joined the London Scottish regiment. He served through terrific fighting at Vimy Ridge and was one of the handful of his company who survived. In June, 1917, he was wounded at Vis-en-Artois. When he recovered he became a flyer in the Royal Air Force, and went into duty as a scout pilot.

In 1919 he joined the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, where he served four years, two of them in Ellesmere Land. There he ex-

plored and mapped several hundred miles of completely unknown territory.

In 1925 he became a newspaperman, working in New York City and in Paris. Since 1930 he had been a member of the staff of the *New York Sun*.

He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Elise Souls Lee, a son, Ian Patrick Lee, and a daughter, Joan Lee.

His death is a severe loss not only to our magazine circle but to writing in general. His stories "The Messiah of Baffin Land," "Monarch of the Barren Land," "Cold!" and an article "Hunting Walrus in the North" appeared in *Adventure*. Other fiction appeared in other publications, and his books "The Heritage of the North," "Hell's Harbor," "Policing the Top of the World" were widely read.

He was in vigorous health, working hard at his newspaper work and his writing. It is a shocking anti-climax to a manly life—Pat Lee dying because a freight train moved on a siding. At the age of 14 in Liverpool he had been in a coach telescoped by a locomotive. Though ten persons were killed and he was pinned under wheels in the wreckage, he was then unhurt.

On *The Sun* staff, where the news of his death came as a stunning personal loss, the noted columnist H. I. Phillips wrote:

"Pat" Lee

You oft had faced the grinning Thing before
And flung defiance in its bitter face;
A smile had been your answer in the war
At Vimy Ridge and in the Arctic space.
And so there was no terror in your eyes . . .
You must have faced the end as few men can;
This be your epitaph 'neath gentle skies;
Soldier, explorer, writer, buddy . . . Man!

ROY deS. Horn's story will be clear going to all of us except perhaps some of our lawyer readers, who may scratch their heads. The yarn seems to involve one kind of salvage case that hasn't yet come up. Says Horn:—

Most people's acquaintance with tugs consists in having seen 'em wrestling a liner into her berth, or maybe snaking a long tow out to sea or sandwiched between a couple of barges snubbed tight alongside till you can't see the tug for the barges. But there's more to it than that. Take, for instance, a tug with a couple of tows and a thousand yards of hawser out, caught out in dirty weather and trying to keep half the shipping of New York from tagging him or cutting his tow. And that's just the mildest of tugging. There are the fire-tugs, and the dynamite carriers—oh, there's plenty doing in the tug business.

And there's plenty to interest the legal mind in the question of salvage. Time was when any ship abandoned by its crew was full prize to the salvager—and the first man that got his line aboard was the man who was salvage master. The law changed that, so now when a tug or other craft pulls a salvage job, it puts in its claim and the Federal judge decides on the amount of salvage it is entitled to.

But that isn't all of it. There are points of salvage law that aren't settled and never will be until the actual case occurs. Ordinarily salvage is interpreted as being the removal of a threatened craft from the danger that is threatening. But what of the obvious case of saving a vessel by hauling the danger away from it?

I became so intrigued with the ramifications of the case that Captain Brodie encountered that I put the problem to a couple of lawyers. One was just the plain or garden variety of lawyer. "Let's see," he said. "You've got a ship and warehouse owner who is breaking the law regulating the storage and handling of explosives, and thereby endangering his own property and the lives and property of innocent citizens as well. During such illegal act, his own employees abandon a ship belonging to him, which ship contains explosives in violation of law. An outside individual at risk of his own life removes the imminent danger, thereby without doubt saving the property of the ship and warehouse owner, as well as the lives and property of other citizens which the unlawful act of the shipowner had placed in jeopardy. Would the volunteering individual have a

just claim for the damage and loss he had prevented? I should say—Yes."

Knowing that one lawyer can be as wrong as two, I took the case to another lawyer friend who is especially interested in Admiralty Law. He beamed upon me as I stated Captain Brodie's claims.

"A sweet case—a lovely case!" he enthused. "If such a case were to come into court, the courtroom would be jammed with lawyers all the way to the rafters."

"And what would Captain Brodie get?" said I.

"Well, of course, he would be entitled to full salvage right on the value of the ship."

"But that blew up," I reminded him. "And it was separately incorporated."

"Well, there would come in the question of salvage claims against the insurance of the ship— "

"But hold on," I said. "What about all the life and property he saved—especially the refinery, warehouses, piers, and other property of the ship owner which he undoubtedly prevented from being blown off the map?"

"Ah—that is what makes the case so beautiful. The fact that the owner in question was engaged in the performance of an illegal act brings in a complication. The question of whether salvage includes removal of danger from a craft as well as the craft from danger is an interesting one. The further question of whether salvage includes property on land as well as afloat is another interesting one. The fact that the rescuing tug acted in the nature of a 'volunteer' must be taken into consideration. Then there is the question of a claim against the insurers of all the property in question—"

Anyone questioning the danger and resulting damage from an explosion of ammunition and dynamite in the vicinity of a large city is referred back to the famous Black Tom explosion of July 30, 1916.

The Black Tom peninsula is a point thrusting out from the New Jersey side into the waters of the Upper Bay just below Manhattan. In 1916 this little point was covered with warehouses, with piers crowded with ships loading munitions and supplies for the war in Europe, there being at that time no embargo in shipping munitions.

At 2 A. M. on July 30th, all that section of New York and New Jersey was shaken by a terrific explosion. A lighter loading ammunition and dynamite had exploded, setting other lighters and carloads of shells and

Due to it occurring in the middle of the explosives off. The explosion was heard distinctly as far as Philadelphia.

night, when only the loading crews were at work, only some half dozen men were blown to pieces and some two hundred seriously injured. But the whole of Black Tom peninsula was wiped out. A huge gaping crater showed where the first explosion had occurred. Thirteen of the eighteen warehouses on the point were blown to bits or burned, as well as scores of craft at the piers or in the vicinity. Buildings in Jersey City were wrecked, houses jarred in Far Rockaway, and cases of burning and exploding ammunition hurled over a half mile radius. Iron doors of buildings on Bedloe's and Ellis Islands were dented and broken by debris hurled by the blasts.

In Manhattan, almost a mile distant, skyscrapers shivered. Timelocks on vaults, and other delicate mechanisms, were shaken and twisted so that they would not function. In Manhattan the cost of shattered windows and plate glass alone exceeded a half million dollars. For days the subways were rigidly and minutely inspected to make certain they were not endangered by the underground stress and strain of the shock.

One interesting incident was an attempt by the tug *Geneva* of the Lehigh Valley Line to tow a dynamite barge out of danger. But the barge took fire and the tug had to cut the line and run for it, abandoning the barge which drifted until it exploded, doing vast damage to shipping and piers in its vicinity.

This was the second serious explosion in the near vicinity of New York within five years. In 1911 a single dynamite lighter blew up, instantly killing thirty people.

LOST TRAILS

T. Glenn Harrison, 187 Baldwin St., St. Paul, Minnesota, wants to hear from Barrett Philip, last heard from at 42 Washington Square, New York City.

J. Russell Leland, 2084 Eastburn Ave., Philadelphia, Pa., wants to hear from fellow members of the crew of the submarine O-12 in 1922.

Nils Lindstrom, 1831 Atlantic Ave., Brooklyn, wants word of Joseph (Texas Joe) Barton, first mate of schooner Albert H. Willis at Eastport, Maine, in 1932.

SOME things remain to be taken up, but must go over to the next issue. There are good letters from comrades hither and yon that demand to be taken up. Right now the printers clamor for us to convene.

H. B.

Information you can't get elsewhere.

ASK ADVENTURE

FISHING with no paraphernalia.

Request:—Did you ever hear of "tickling" trout and catching them with your hands? I saw this done in a small trout stream in Pennsylvania and am not sure whether they were tame trout or whether it can be done at any time. As I remember it, the man held his hands together under the water and after the trout had lost their fright they would swim through his arms and finally settle down close to his hands so that he could grab them. Again I ask, were they tame?

—E. B. Crane, South Orange, N. J.

Reply by Mr. John B. Thompson, Ozark Ripley:—I have seen trout caught in the manner you describe. Caught one myself that way, in the Nipigon River, right under the Canadian Pacific Bridge. I remember seeing catfish caught in almost the same way, in small streams during hot weather. The fishermen wade in and feel under rocks and banks for the fish, gradually working their hands into the gills, holding and carrying the fish in that way. The natives of the Ozarks call the sport "grabbing."

YOU need to study your mink.

Request:—For two years I have been reading and studying fur farming. I have had college training, some agriculture, and I am not afraid of a little hard work. I plan to raise mink in Nova Scotia, Annapolis County. It is fairly high ground consisting of sixty acres of cleared and semi-cleared land.

1.—Are mink profitable fur bearers?

2.—How much would it cost to start a place; how many needed?

3.—Who in your opinion has the best saleable mink?

4.—Just how would you go about it if you were in my place?

Please give me your honest and frank opinion about this idea.

—Alexander E. Morrison, New York, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Fred L. Bowden:—Your location is fine; mighty good mink pelts should be produced almost any place in Nova Scotia. The one thing which might cause you some trouble is adequate food supply, and this can be obviated by using some of

the very good mink foods on the market.

1.—Yes, many men are making a fine income from mink. Mink, however, are like all of the other fur bearers, they must be studied. The man who expects to buy a couple of pairs of any fur animals, and then sit back and watch them make him rich without any further work or attention is beaten before he starts.

2.—Depends on how large you start. I suggest that you secure the current copies of *Fur, Fish, and Game*, and also *Hunter, Trader, Trapper*. Both of these magazines carry advertisements of fur farmers who have breeders for sale. My suggestion would be for you to secure, say, a trio, i. e., one male and two females to start. See how you like the business from handling these.

3.—Almost any of the advertisers in the two magazines named. Don't buy *cheap mink*. These are expensive at any price. I would get dark mink, the darkest I could find, and breed for dark mink exclusively. It is up to you to decide which of the strains you prefer. Labrador, interior Alaska, Wisconsin, Quebec, or what have you. Or a cross between two strains. But get dark mink.

4.—I would read everything I could get on the subject. I would find time to visit several of the best mink farms. You might write to the New York State Conservation Department, Albany, N. Y., for mink farms location, since all fur farmers in this state must have licenses from this Department. Visit them, ask questions, see how things are done. Better still, if possible, get yourself a job on one for a few months. But whatever you do, don't let anyone sell you any light colored mink for your breeding stock.

A FEW volumes about Napoleon, the greatest military leader of all times.

Request: Could you tell me if there is a life of Napoleon I, based on his campaigns, each one complete in detail, with the morning state of his forces year by year, and battle by battle?

Or is there one complete edition? I thought that perhaps there was one recommended by the Command and General Staff School for reference and study. It should have numerous maps and illustrations and cannot be too technical.

—Lou Miller, Kansas City, Mo.

Reply by Capt. Glen R. Townsend:—Replying to your inquiry concerning a history of the campaign of Napoleon Bonaparte, I am glad to be able to give you the following information.

The most complete study of the Napoleonic campaigns from a purely military viewpoint, which is available in English, is undoubtedly the monumental work of Colonel Theodore A. Dodge, in his "Great Captains" series. Four volumes of this series are devoted to a study of the campaigns of Napoleon. Here you will find practically everything that is known concerning the strength, dispositions and movements of the armies which took part in the Napoleonic campaigns, together with a critical analysis from a military viewpoint. The great drawback to this particular work is its price, which is $5.00 per volume.

A very good one-volume study of the campaigns of Napoleon is "Napoleon The First" by August Fournier. This volume sells for $2.50. Another standard work on Napoleon and his campaigns is "Napoleon Bonaparte" by Rose. This, as I recall, is in two volumes, and although I do not have at hand information as to the price, it is very much less expensive than the work by Dodge mentioned above. The works of Rose and Fournier are usually available in the better libraries. Dodge's volumes are not so commonly available, but it might be worthwhile to inquire about them at your public library.

A most interesting, instructive and inexpensive work covering one phase of the Napoleonic campaigns is the book, "Napoleon Bonaparte's First Campaign with Comments" by Herbert H. Sargent, formerly an officer of the United States Army. This little volume deals with the Italian campaign of 1796 in a very complete and instructive manner, and is withal so readable, that it should be read by everyone interested in military history. Published by A. C. McClurg and Company of Chicago in 1895, it is now somewhat rare, but perhaps you would be fortunate enough to pick up a copy at one of the larger second-hand book stores in Kansas City.

AN ambling horse is no rocking chair.

Request:—I ride a horse a lot. I am a Boy Scout and read quite a bit. I read about a salted horse in African Clearings.

What, exactly, is a salted horse, and what is an ambling horse?

—Dick Girvin, Alberta, Canada

Reply by Capt. F. J. Franklin:—A "salted" horse, as it is known in South Africa, is a horse that has had "horse sickness." I know of no other name for the sickness. It resembles somewhat "vinderpest" which attacks cattle out there. It is supposed to be caused by the bite of a tsetse fly. The disease re-

sembles influenza as we humans know it. Horse sickness is usually fatal to a horse and only about ten percent recover and when a horse does recover he is very valuable because he is immune to the sickness.

An ambling horse has the peculiar gait, a cross between a canter and a trot, that the Boers teach their horses. They claim a horse lasts for longer journeys when so gaited. A Boer seldom gallops or canters. We English cannot endure a horseback ride on an ambling horse. We have a nickname for the gait—"Three hapense and tuppence."

THE feathered end of the arrow tickles the ear.

Request:—A friend and I have had an argument. I claim that a hunting bow, or target bow either, at "full cock" has the feather-end of the arrow pulled back almost all the way to the hunter's ear. My friend disagrees. Am I wrong?

—Wm. LaRue, Pt. Townsend, Wash.

Reply by Mr. Earl B. Powell:—The proper draw for an arrow is usually according to the archer's style of shooting, but it is always drawn to the face.

In one style, the arrow is drawn so that the feathered end is held under the jaw. That is, the forefinger rests against the jaw and the arrow between the first and second fingers. This is usually used by "point of aim archers." In the other or hunting style which I use, I draw so that the tip of my right forefinger touches the right corner of my mouth.

So you may consider that to all intents and purposes you are correct. Either way, the end of the arrow is near the ear.

You can refer to any book on archery and you will find that it is close to right. In any case, the arrow is drawn to the face of the archer and should be so that the arrow is in line under the pupil of the right eye. This gives the line. Elevation is another matter and is figured out in various ways.

WHERE autograph collecting and philately meet.

Request:—I am not a stamp collector, but am a collector of autographs of prominent persons. Right now, I am striving to make a collection of envelopes franked by noted persons who have this privilege. As you are an expert on stamps, and as franks are closely associated, I though perhaps you might be able to aid me.

Could you inform me as to what persons can frank envelopes, thus eliminating the use of stamps. Can all United States Senators, Members of the House, Members of the President's Cabinet, the President, and Vice-President use the frank?

—K. Robert Whittemore, Union, N. Y.

Reply by Dr. H. A. Davis:—United States Senators and Representatives have the franking privilege, but use envelopes with their names printed thereon such as "John Jones, M. C."

Department heads use the franked envelope of their departments.

All except those to whom Congress has voted the privilege use a printed frank, and therefore would not be of much use to you in obtaining an autograph. Only those to whom Congress has voted the special privilege such as President's wives, write their name as a frank on the envelope.

IT takes a lot of tinkering to antique a ship model.

Request:—Can you recommend any literature pertaining to the building of a model of Henry Hudson's *Half Moon*. The hull details on the plans I now have are not as clear as they should be and as a result I am having difficulties.

If you will answer the following questions I am sure it will help me make better models:—

What kind of paint is used to give an antiqued look?

What is used to make the sails old looking?

The name of a strong, quick-drying, wood glue?

—Chas. L. Hollawood, Upper Darby, Pa.

Reply by Mr. Charles H. Hall:—Try R. C. Anderson's "The Rigging of Ships in the Days of the Spritsail Topmast, 1600-1720." You will probably find it in the Philadelphia Public Library. You will very likely need to consult it for advice about rigging and there is a good illustration of the *Mayflower* that might help. Also, while at the library, consult H. E. Chapman's "Architecture Navalis Mercatoria," published in 1769. It is a most valuable book for anyone interested in the old ships.

I use artists' paint and small brushes, the largest not more than a quarter of an inch wide. I mix up two or three colors on a bit of mahogany until I get the right shade—raw umber doped up with a little red and a bit of black—but you will no doubt want to ex-

periment yourself. Anyhow, don't use a glossy paint and don't use black alone but warm it up with a little red or some burnt sienna.

Try soaking your sails in a solution of coffee for the brownish tint that one associates with an old time model.

For glue, I know nothing better than Ambroid. It dries quickly and holds well, even without using clamps.

THE filing system for campaign medals seems to be complicated enough.

Request:—Sometime ago I purchased the U. S. Yangtze Campaign medal which was stamped on the rim "M—No. 1234," which I assumed indicated that it had been awarded to an officer or man of the Marine Corps serving with the Navy.

Later I bought the Army War with Spain Campaign badge which was also stamped on the rim M—No. 4821. Since this latter badge was for the Army, my theory regarding an award to the Marine Corps would not hold true. What is the significance of this initial "M?"

Regarding the Italian medal given to those who aided in the relief of Calabria during the earthquake of December, 1908—sometimes I find this is called the Medal of Merit, other times the Calabria Earthquake Medal, or Messina Earthquake medal. Which of these designations are official?

—Otis R. Bun, Van Nuys, Calif.

Reply by Mr. Howland Wood:—I am sorry to say that I cannot tell you the reason why some of our campaign badges have an M before the number. It certainly does not mean Marine Corps as I have seen them on campaign medals that were not given to Marines. For many years the Marine Corps had their own medals.

Many of the navy medals are not numbered. As regards the Italian medal, I think the Italians call these the Medal of Merit. The English generally call it the Messina Medal and I think our Naval-men call it the Earthquake medal.

There are two forms of it, one says Medaglia Commemorativa, Terremoto Calabro Suculo 28 Dicembre 1908. The other does not have the words Commerative Medal and the rest of the inscription is in Italian rather than in Latin.

WHATEVER his nationality, the rattler is a poisonous fellow.

Request:—Is there any difference in the effect of the poison of the rattlesnake found in North America and that found in South America. Also please tell me the effect that the poison of the bushmaster and cobra has on the human body.

—E. S. Tunstall, Bay Minette, Ala.

Reply by Mr. Clifford H. Pope:—The Cascavel is the only rattlesnake found in South America. It ranges from Mexico to Uruguay and Argentina. The venom of this deadly reptile is sharply set off by its action from the venoms of the many species of North American rattlers. The bite of the Cascavel causes little or no local swelling or bleeding but death is preceded by blindness, paralysis and suffocation. The head of the victim slumps forward or rolls from side to side as if the neck were broken. Like all other rattlers the Cascavel is a pit-viper. The serum made for North American rattlesnakes is relatively ineffective against the poison of the Cascavel and the fer-de-lance. Curiously enough the venom of the Cascavel from Mexico has less general and more local action than that from the same species far south in South America. Also one North American species possesses venom that approaches to a degree that of the Cascavel.

The venoms of the fer-de-lance and bushmaster cause immediate pains and oedema; also hemorrhage. Later, after the poison has had time to have its destructive action on the tissues, the throat becomes dry and blood oozes through the mucous membrane and into the intestinal tract, or even through the skin about the eyes and mouth. If death does not ensue promptly progressive necrosis may set in.

The victim of a cobra bite dies from respiratory paralysis. The initial symptoms are: a severe local burning sensation, oedema of the site, prostration and drowsiness, excessive salivation, vomiting, cold sweat, and a rapid pulse followed by a slower pulse.

The bushmaster, fer-de-lance and Cascavel are *the* dangerous snakes of northern South America although several poisonous coral snakes and other pit-vipers occur there.

A SCRIMSHAW a clamdigger tonged from the sea. Probably it went down a century ago with a sailor lad who carved it out for his lass.

Request:—I am writing you about a beautiful thing I found. It is a fork, as near as I can make out. But it has been carved out of solid bone. It is the prettiest kind of work I ever laid my eyes on. I have seen a good many odd things but nothing can compare with this relic of mine.

I follow and work on the water in my spare time. I have had this relic quite some time, and have been offered a good sum for it. I got this when I was tonging for hard clams between two islands on the edge of a channel and I am sorry to say the tooth of my tongs broke one of the Ferris wheels. There were three of them at the top suspended through the center, there is a column of some kind of hard wood on which the cradle rests for the wheels. The cradle sits on four columns, designed with a swirl. They sit on four Colonial columns. I can't exactly explain all details but I have drawn a sketch for your approval. I am sure you will agree it is beautiful. It must have taken an awful long time to turn out this fork. It is about twelve or thirteen inches long.

—Howard F. Burns, Shelter Island, N. Y.

Reply by Mr. Arthur Woodward:—The peculiar looking object which you found on the shore is apparently one of the elaborate bits of scrimshaw work made by sailors on long voyages in the old sailing ships. This particular item was known as a pie-jagger, the little wheels at the top were used to crimp the edges of the pie; the smaller items of the fork on the opposite end were used to perforate crust. Such objects were often made by the sailors for their sweethearts and assumed a variety of forms. Men on board the whaling ships carved these out of walrus ivory or whale bone and brought them home as presents to their women folks. I should judge this piece to date about 1820 to 1830, perhaps earlier. No doubt some ship was wrecked on the island in days gone by and this jagger was in the ditty box of some unfortunate sailor. It is one of the number of American curios which are now being collected by people interested in the early phases of our American life.

This is Mr. Burns' drawing of the pie-jagger he found.

A DAGGER made from the leg bone of a bird might do some damage.

Request:—Could you please give me some information on the weapons used by the natives of Papua?

—B. PETERS, Oxford, Ohio.

Reply by Mr. L. P. B. Armit:—I am afraid I cannot explain in a short letter the various weapons used by the aboriginal natives of New Guinea.

The natives use spears, bows and arrows, wooden-clubs, stone-clubs, bone daggers, knives made of bamboo or hard wood. The spears vary in length, six feet to sixteen feet. They make them out of hard woods or the hard outer surface of palm-trunks. Their bows range from four to ten feet in length; the arrows are usually made with a shaft of light cane with a point of hard wood. They are generally barbed for a foot or more from the point. Some arrows are tipped with the bones of birds or the toe-nails of a cassowary (a large wingless bird a little smaller than an ostrich). Porcupine quills, fish bones, thorns and sharp spikes of wood are often used as barbs.

A very nasty type of arrow has the barbs set both ways, so the arrow cannot be easily drawn from a wound. Arrows used to shoot fish have several sharp, barbed points set in the form of a circle. Arrows for shooting birds often have a flat, blunt tip, so that the bird will only be stunned or knocked out when it is hit.

The bows are made from bamboo, palm wood or any tough wood that will bend easily. The bow-strings are usually a strip of strong cane or twisted bark-fibre.

Spears are usually made of hard wood or palm-wood, and they vary from the heavy, barbed, needle-pointed type to light ones that are used to kill small animals and birds.

The wooden clubs range from a roughly shaped length of wood to flat, well-carved weapons, many of which are made of ebony. The stone-clubs are made in various shapes—discs, balls, stars, and pineapple-shaped. They take a long time to make, for the only tools used are sand and water, and plenty of hard work.

The daggers are made of wood or bone. A very common dagger is made from the leg-bone of the cassowary. The bamboo knives are hardened with fire, and they are sharpened by removing a sliver of fibre off the edge. The wooden knives are mostly blunt, but they can cut freely when wielded by a strong man.

If you visit Washington, D. C., you will see specimens of these weapons in the Smithsonian Museum. At New York there is a fine collection to be seen in the Museum of Natural History; and there is also a fine collection in the Field Museum at Chicago.

THERE'S a magazine devoted to the homing pigeon.

Request:—I am interested in homing pigeons and would like to get all the information concerning them I can.

Where can I get pigeons and do they need any special care?

Where can I get books about them?

Are there any clubs or groups that I can join?

—WILLIAM BIKFASY, Wellington, Ohio.

Reply by Mr. Davis Quinn:—Homing pigeons require rather specialized care and training, a description of which I could not adequately cover in the space of this letter. Instead I recommend these fine books on the subject:

"Pigeon Queries" (50c), and "The Pocket Loft Book" (40c), obtainable from Chas. F. Hoser, R.D.4, Norristown, Pa.

"The Full Secret About the Knowledge of Racing Pigeons" by Frans Van Linden, Belgium, 3rd Edition, $2.00, obtainable from Julius Boutte, 1916 E. 4th St., Mishawaka, Indiana. (A very excellent and thorough work on the subject).

"The American Racing Pigeon News", a monthly magazine published by C. F. Hoser, Norristown, Pa., should be valuable to you, costs 15c a copy, $1.50 a year.

The American Racing Pigeon Union, care of Edw. Barnes, Secy., 214 Congress St., Jersey City, N. J., should be able to give you information about joining or organizing groups interested in this sport in your vicinity.

Pigeons specially bred for racing or "homing" may be purchased from the following:

Otto Grabert, Allison Park, Pa.

T. Edward Cordis, 705 Longmeadow St., Longmeadow, Mass.

H. F. McIntyre, 20 Foley St., Hartford, Conn.

Andy Vorsko, 5512 Flowerdale Ave., Cleveland, Ohio.

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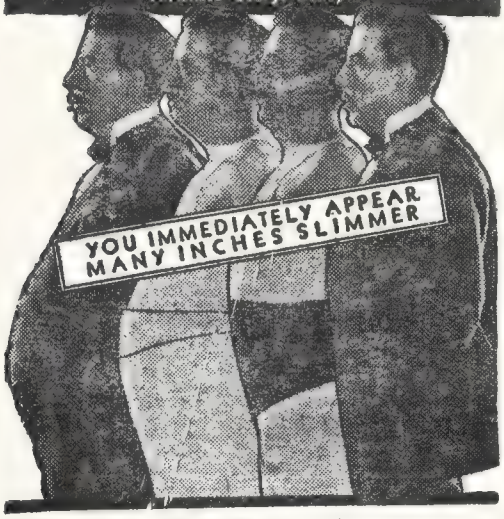

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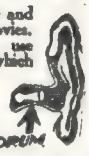

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For Old Gold Jewelry and Bridgework. Turn your old worn-out jewelry into good American dollars, simply by mailing it to us for a free, honest appraisal. If our offer is not satisfactory we return it.

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Largest Buyers of Old Jewelry By Mail in the U. S.

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SEND ONLY 20 CENTS with name, age, and address and receive by return mail set of 14 TRIAL GLASSES to select from to fit your eyes. NOTHING MORE TO PAY until you can see satisfactorily far and near. Then the above Beautiful Style will cost you only $3.99; other styles $2.20 up. MONEY BACK if unsatisfactory after 10-day trial. CIRCULAR with latest styles and lowest prices FREE.

MODERN SPECTACLE CO.
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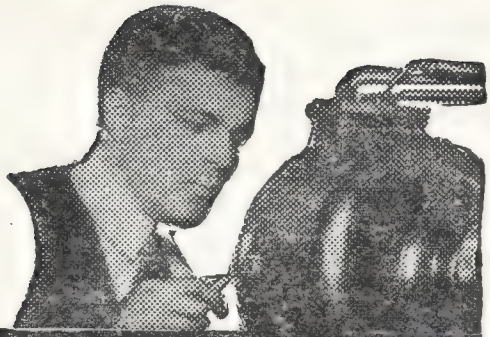

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Whether your age is 16 or 40. Let us train you to prepare for positions that lead to good salaries in Electricity — NOT by correspondence, but by an amazing modern method right here in the great Coyne Shops that gives you a practical Training in 90 days! Getting into Electricity is easier than you imagine if you choose the right method. You don't need previous experience or need a lot of book learning. Start any time after you have enrolled.

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Mail the coupon below and I'll send you all details of my monthly tuition plan. Under this plan you can get your training first and then pay for your tuition later in small monthly payments extending over an 18-month period, starting 5 months after you start school.

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Dear Mr. Lewis: Without obligation send me your big, free catalog with facts about Coyne Training and details of your Monthly Tuition Payment Plan.

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Spare Time Training *that helps you*

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DO YOU want to speed up the return of prosperity to you—insure your early and large participation in the new jobs, promotions and salary increases—get fullest benefits from the business pick-up?

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Present Position .....

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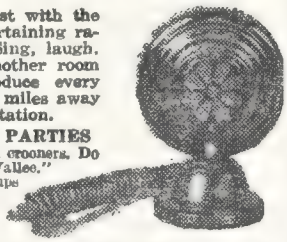
Put on your own broadcast with the WALCO MIKE, most entertaining radio device yet produced. Sing, laugh, talk, crack jokes from another room and your radio will produce every sound as though you were miles away at a regular broadcasting station.



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☐ Check here if ENCLOSING $1—thus saving postage charge. Same refund guarantee applies.

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Address.....

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No Experience Needed. Sells easy to amazing big market. Combination

Blow Torch and Soldering Iron

No pressure system. No pumps. No stove. No charcoal. Operates with 100% satisfaction. Neat, complete, compact. Guaranteed by 30 year old company. Write quick for New Agent's Plan and Exclusive territory offer! Hurry!

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Relieve Pain In 9 Minutes

To relieve the torturing pain of Neuritis, Rheumatism, Neuralgia or Lumbago in 9 minutes, get the Doctor's Prescription **NURITO.** Absolutely safe. No opiates, no narcotics. Does the work quickly—must relieve your worst pain in nine minutes or your money back at Druggist's. Don't suffer. Use guaranteed **NURITO** today.

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Dry Cleans! Sells Itself!

REVOLUTIONARY invention banishes old-style clothes brushes forever. Never anything like it! Secret chemical plus unique vacuum action. Keeps clothing spic-and-span. Also cleans hats, drapes, window shades, upholstered furniture, etc. Saves cleaning bills. Low priced. Sells on sight. *Agents cleaning up!* **SAMPLE OFFER** Samples sent at our risk to first person in each locality who writes. No obligation. Get details. *Be first—send in your name TODAY.*

KRISTEE MFG. Co., Dept. 962, Akron, Ohio

"VEST POCKET" $7.95 NEW EDITION $7.95

The smoothest hardest shooting high grade 25 caliber Auto. pistol on the market at half price, 7 shot, three safeties with squeezer grip. Shoots standard 25 Colt cartridges at 65c box. Leather holster 60c each. Order now $7.95. *Write for Catalog of Guns, Rifles, Colts, S&W, Binoculars, etc. $2 Deposit required on C.O.D.'s.*

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The bigger they are, the harder they fall. Learn Jiu-Jitsu! 13 secret knock out blows copyrighted by world famous Police Jiu-Jitsu Instructor.

A little jab with the tip of fingers or strike with edge of hand to the right spot and the toughest guys go out like a light. The world famous Northwest Mounted Police use his method in part of their training. The G-Men have adopted Jiu-Jitsu in their successful war against crime. Whether you are young or old, man or woman, boy or girl, send now for this illustrated booklet easily read. Full price 15c postpaid. Also learn how you may defend yourself against any man regardless of size or strength whether he is armed with gun, knife or club.

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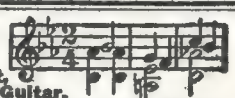

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SELL ONLY (4) ALL WOOL SUITS to get a FREE SUIT. No limit to number of FREE SUITS you may earn. Prices $14.95 to $26.95. ZIPPER leather carrying case. Sample Line Free. No experience needed to make BIG MONEY. All Suits Individually Cut and Tailored To Measure. Satisfaction or Money Back Guarantee.

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Are you tormented with the itching tortures of eczema, rashes, athlete's foot, eruptions, or other skin afflictions? For quick and happy relief, use Dr. Dennis' cooling, antiseptic, liquid **D.D.D. PRESCRIPTION.** Its gentle oils soothe the irritated skin. Clear, greaseless and stainless—dries fast. Stops itching instantly. A 35c trial bottle, at any drug stores, proves it—or money back.

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BEAUTIFUL CLEAR LOUD TONE DIRECT FROM POCKET RADIO!

No Dangling Phones to Bother With. All one unit—just like the big sets, but weighs only 6 ozs. Fits pocket easily. Take it with you—listen to music, sports, radio entertainment, etc. No batteries, tubes or electrical connections required. **A Guaranteed** Pocket Radio,

EASY TO USE—WORKS IMMEDIATELY

Beautiful reception and tone. Accurately made, precisely assembled, rigidly tested, assures excellent performance. Tunes broadcast band. Costs nothing to operate and should last for years. Tuning control is the only moving part. Nothing to adjust. No difficult hook ups. Comes complete with built-in phone, ready to tune in, with easy instructions for use in camp, office, boats, picnics, home, hotel, bed, etc., and take it with you while traveling, in auto, bicycle, etc.

SEND NO MONEY! Write for yours today. Play it as soon as you get it. Pay postman only $2.99 and a few cents postage. State color wanted (Silver, Brown, Black, White, Blue). An ideal gift. Amaze your friends.

Little Giant Radio Co., 3959 Lincoln Avenue, Dept. 3501 Chicago, Ill.

BE A DETECTIVE

Work home or travel. Experience unnecessary. **DETECTIVE** Particulars FREE. Write NOW to **GEORGE P. R. WAGNER** 2640 Broadway, N.Y.

FREE FOR ASTHMA

If you suffer with those terrible attacks of Asthma at this season of the year; if you choke and gasp for breath don't fail to send at once for a free trial of a remarkable method. No matter where you live nor what your age or occupation nor whether you have any faith in any remedy under the Sun, send for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Write now and test the method free on your own case. Address:

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ARMY-NAVY Bargains

Haversacks	$ .75	Cart. belt	$ .60
Machete-bolo	$1.50	Flint pistol	$6.95
Army saddle	$9.85	M/L shot gun	$4.85
Springfield rifle, cal. 45/70, 32½" barrel			$4.25

1936 catalog, 364 pages of pistols, armor, guns, daggers, etc., mailed for 50 cents. New special circular for 3c stamp.

Established 1865

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LET ME SEND YOU THIS TAILORED SUIT

AND PAY YOU UP TO $10.00 IN A DAY!

Amazing new idea! Wear this splendid suit and I'll pay you for it if you follow my easy plan and qualify. Choose suit from fine woolens, tailored to your measure. Just show it to your friends. Make up to $10 in a day—easy—representing big nationally-known tailoring house. No experience needed. **ACTUAL SAMPLES FREE!** Write today for details of sensational new plan and actual Samples. SEND NO MONEY.

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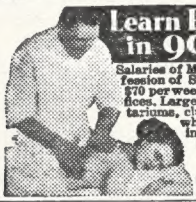
PILES DON'T BE CUT

Until You Try This Wonderful Treatment

for pile suffering. If you have piles in any form write for a FREE sample of **Page's Pile Tablets** and you will bless the day that you read this. **Write today. E. R. Page Co., 408-B7 Page Bldg., Marshall, Mich.**



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TEA AND COFFEE ROUTES

PAYING UP TO $60.00 IN A WEEK

National company needs more men at once to make regular calls on local routes. No experience needed. Complete outfit sent on trial without money risk. **I'll give you brand new Ford car as bonus.** Rush name on postcard for FREE Facts.

ALBERT MILLS
3718 Monmouth, Cincinnati, Ohio

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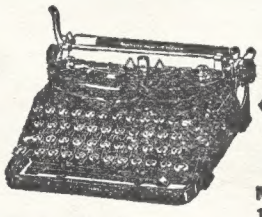
NEW REMINGTON *NOISELESS* PORTABLE!



10¢ A DAY

Money Back Guarantee
10-Day Free Trial Offer

AT LAST! The famous Remington Noiseless Portable that speaks in a whisper is available for only 10¢ a day. Here is your opportunity to get a real Remington Noiseless Portable direct from the factory. Equipped with all attachments that make for complete writing equipment. Standard keyboard. Automatic ribbon reverse. Variable line spacer and all the conveniences of the finest portable ever built. PLUS the NOISELESS feature. Act now while this special opportunity holds good. Send coupon TODAY for details.

YOU DON'T RISK A PENNY

We send you the Remington Noiseless Portable direct from the factory with 10 days FREE trial. If you are not satisfied, send it back. WE PAY ALL SHIPPING CHARGES.

● FREE TYPING COURSE

With your new Remington Noiseless Portable we will send you—absolutely FREE—a 19-page course in typing. It teaches the Touch System, used by all expert typists. It is simply written and completely illustrated. Instructions are as simple as A, B, C. Even a child can easily understand this method. A little study and the average person, child or adult, becomes fascinated. Follow this course during the 10-Day Trial Period we give you with your typewriter and you will wonder why you ever took the trouble to write letters by hand.

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Also under this new Purchase Plan we will send you FREE with every Remington Noiseless Portable a special carrying case sturdily built of 3-ply wood. This handsome case is covered with heavy du Pont fabric. The top is removed by one motion, leaving the machine firmly attached to the base. This makes it easy to use your Remington anywhere—on knees, in chairs, on trains. Don't delay... send in the coupon for complete details!

SEND COUPON WHILE LOW PRICES HOLD

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315 Fourth Ave., New York, N. Y.

Please tell me how I can get a new Remington Noiseless Portable typewriter, plus FREE Typing Course and carrying case, for only 10c a day. Also send me new illustrated catalogue.

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

Kidneys must *clean* acids from your *blood*

DR. W. R. GEORGE
Former Health Commissioner of Indianapolis

Your System is Poisoned

And May Cause Getting Up Nights, Nervousness, Leg Pains, and a Run-Down Condition When Kidneys Function Poorly

Your health, vitality and energy are extremely dependent upon the proper functioning of your kidneys. This is easy to understand when you learn that each kidney, although only the size of your clenched fist, contains 4½ million, tiny, delicate tubes or filters. Your blood circulates through these tiny filters 200 times an hour, night and day. Nature provides this method of removing acids, poisons, and toxins from your blood.

Causes Many Ills

Dr. Walter R. George, many years Health Commissioner of Indianapolis, recently stated: "Most people do not realize this, but the kidneys probably are the most remarkable organs in the entire human anatomy. Their work is just as important and just as vital to good health as the work of the heart. As Health Commissioner of the City of Indianapolis for many years and as medical director for a large insurance company, I have had opportunity to observe that a surprisingly high percentage of people are devitalized, rundown, nervous, tired, and worn-out because of poorly functioning kidneys."

If your kidneys slow down and do not function properly and fail to remove approximately 3 pints of Acids, Poisons, and liquids from your blood every 24 hours, then there is a gradual accumulation of these Acids and Wastes, and slowly, but surely, your system becomes poisoned, making you feel old before your time, rundown and worn out.

Many other troublesome and painful symptoms may be caused by poorly functioning kidneys, such as Getting Up Nights, Nervousness, Leg Pains, Dizziness, Frequent Headaches and Colds, Rheumatic Pains, Swollen Joints, Circles Under Eyes, Backaches, Loss of Vitality, Burning, Itching, Smarting and Acidity.

Help Kidneys Doctors' Way

Druggists and doctors in over thirty-five countries throughout the world think that the proper way to help kidney functions is with the modern, up-to-date Doctor's prescription, Cystex, because it is scientifically prepared in strict accordance with the United States and British Pharmacopoeia to act directly on the kidneys as a diuretic. For instance, Dr. T. J. Rastelli, famous surgeon and scientist of London, says: "Cystex is one of the finest remedies I have ever known in my medical practice. Any doctor will recommend it for its definite benefit in the treatment of many functional kidney and bladder disorders. It is safe and harmless."

And Dr. T. A. Ellis, of Toronto, Canada, has stated: "Cystex' influence in aiding the treatment of sluggish kidney and bladder functions can not be over-estimated." And Dr. C. Z. Rendelle, of San Francisco, said: "I can truthfully recommend the use of Cystex," while Dr. N. G. Giannini, widely known Italian physician, stated: "I have found men and women of middle age particularly grateful for the benefits received from such medication. A feeling of many years lifted off one's age often follows the fine effects of Cystex."

Guaranteed 8-Day Test

If you suffer from any of the conditions mentioned in this article or feel rundown, worn out, and old before your time, poorly functioning kidneys may be the real cause of your trouble. And because Cystex has given successful results in thousands of cases throughout the world after other things had failed, you should put this doctor's prescription to the test immediately, with the understanding that it must prove satisfactory in every way within 8 days, or you merely return the empty package and the full purchase price is refunded.

Because Cystex is specially and scientifically prepared to act directly on the kidneys as a diuretic, it is quick and positive in action. Within 48 hours most people report a remarkable improvement and complete satisfaction in 8 days. Cystex costs only three cents a dose at druggists. Put it to the test today. Under the guarantee you must feel younger, stronger, and better than you have in a long time—you must feel that Cystex has done the work thoroughly and completely, or you merely return the empty package and it costs nothing. You are the sole judge of your own satisfaction. You can't afford to take chances with cheap, inferior, or irritating drugs or any medicine that is not good enough to be guaranteed. Telephone your druggist for guaranteed Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex) today.

NEW TYPE CHEAP OIL BURNER

WHY COOK OR HEAT With COAL or WOOD

Quick heat at turn of valve—hotter, cheaper, no dirt, ashes or drudgery. Burns cheap oil new way—no clogging up or carbon.

Slips into Any STOVE, RANGE or FURNACE.

SENT ON TRIAL Prove it cuts fuel bills, pays for itself quickly by what it saves at our risk. Offer of **FREE SAMPLE** TO AGENTS Wonderful money-maker, spare or full time. Write quick—a postal card will do. Address UNITED FACTORIES, B-762 Factory Building, Kansas City, Mo.

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Private formula ointment used by the McCleary Clinic, as part of its regular treatment of rectal cases. May now be used in your home. It soothes and gives much temporary relief. Large trial tube sent to any rectal sufferer for 10¢ to pay postage and incidental charges. THE McCLEARY CLINIC, 236-A Elms Blvd., Excelsior Springs, Mo.

ASTHMA Treatment mailed on FREE TRIAL. If satisfied, send $1; if not, it's Free. Write for treatment today.
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TAP DANCE — BE POPULAR

Beg. or Adv. Tap $1. Sample Tap lesson for Beg. with Standard Time-Step & Break. 25c. Beg. Waltz & Foxtrot, $1. HAL LEROY studied here. Send for list "K."
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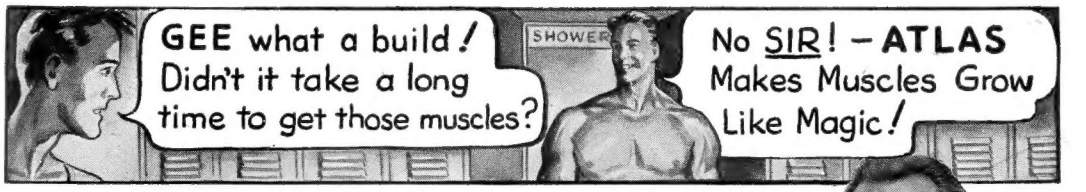
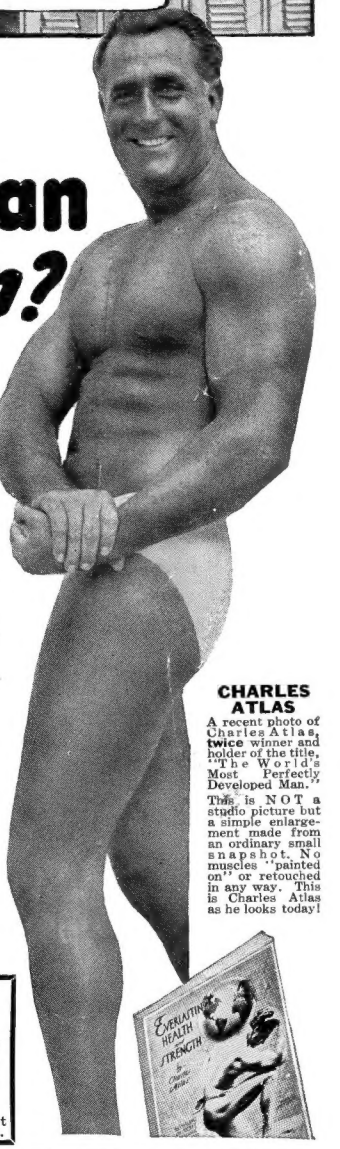
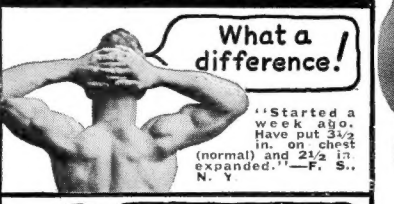
Dime Detective Magazine

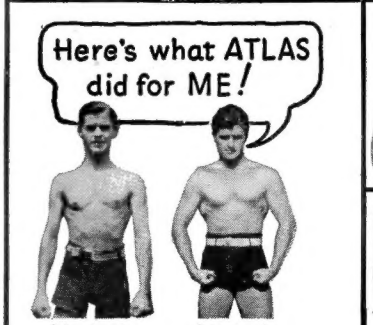


Will You Give Me 7 Days to PROVE I Can Make YOU a *New Man?*



LET ME START SHOWING YOU RESULTS LIKE THESE





For quick results I recommend CHARLES ATLAS
"Am sending snapshot of wonderful progress. Certainly recommend you for quick results!"—W. G., N. J.

CHARLES ATLAS
A recent photo of Charles Atlas, **twice** winner and holder of the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." This is NOT a studio picture but a simple enlargement made from an ordinary small snapshot. No muscles "painted on" or retouched in any way. This is Charles Atlas as he looks today!

7-Day TRIAL OFFER

I could fill this whole magazine with enthusiastic reports from OTHERS. But what you want to know is—"What can Charles Atlas do for ME?"

Find out—**at my risk!** Right in first 7 days I'll start to PROVE I can turn YOU into a man of might and muscle. And it will be the kind of PROOF you (and anyone else) can SEE, FEEL, MEASURE with a tape!

My FREE BOOK tells about my amazing 7-DAY TRIAL OFFER—an offer no other instructor as ever DARED make! If YOU want smashing strength, big muscles, glowing health—I'll show you results QUICK!

Sterling Silver Cup Being Given Away
This valuable cup, of solid sterling silver, stands about 14 inches high on a black mahogany base. I will award it, engraved, to my pupil who makes the most improvement in his development within the next three months.

FREE BOOK

I myself was once a 97-pound weakling—sickly, half-alive. Then I discovered "Dynamic-Tension." And I twice won—against all comers—the title, "The World's Perfectly Developed Man"!

I have no use for apparatus. "Dynamic-Tension" ALONE **(right in your own home)** will start new inches of massive power pushing out your chest—build up your shoulders to champion huskiness—put regular mountains of muscle on your biceps—free you of constipation, pimples—make those stomach muscles of yours hard ridges!

Make me PROVE it! Gamble a postage stamp. Send coupon for my **FREE BOOK AT ONCE!** Address me personally: **Charles Atlas, Dept. 83P, 115 East 23rd Street, New York, N. Y.**

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I want proof that DYNAMIC-TENSION will make a new man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send me your free book, **"Everlasting Health and Strength."**

Name .....
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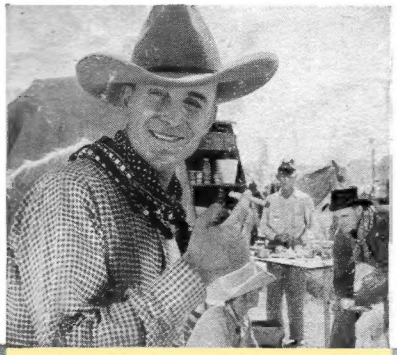
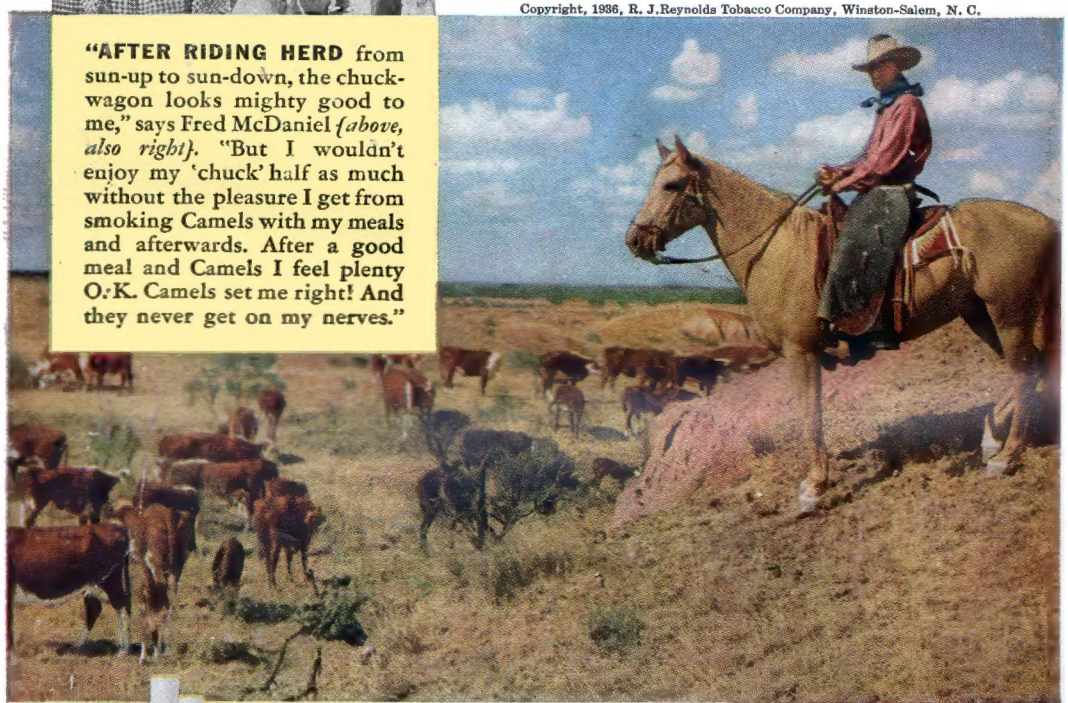


"For Digestion's Sake Smoke Camels!"

"MIGHTY GOOD ADVICE," SAYS THIS HARD-RIDING TEXAS COW PUNCHER

Copyright, 1936, R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company, Winston-Salem, N. C.

"AFTER RIDING HERD from sun-up to sun-down, the chuck-wagon looks mighty good to me," says Fred McDaniel *(above, also right)*. "But I wouldn't enjoy my 'chuck' half as much without the pleasure I get from smoking Camels with my meals and afterwards. After a good meal and Camels I feel plenty O.K. Camels set me right! And they never get on my nerves."



COSTLIER TOBACCOS

Camels are made from finer, MORE EXPENSIVE TOBACCOS ...Turkish and Domestic... than any other popular brand.

Smoking Camels, you enjoy a sense of greater ease while you're eating, and afterwards too!

WHAT Fred McDaniel says about Camels is backed up 100% by baseball's "Iron Man," Lou Gehrig—by Frank Buck, of "Bring 'Em Back Alive" fame—by Eleanor Tennant, outstanding woman tennis coach of the U. S.—and by millions of other Camel smokers in all walks of life. Enjoy Camels at every meal. They speed up the flow of digestive fluids. Increase alkalinity. Help you *enjoy* food. Camels set you right! They're *the* cigarette for steady smoking. Light up a Camel any time and get an invigorating "lift."

BUSY SECRETARY. "I smoke Camels," says attractive Joselyn Libby. "Camels put more fun into eating and smoking too. So many girls smoke Camels."